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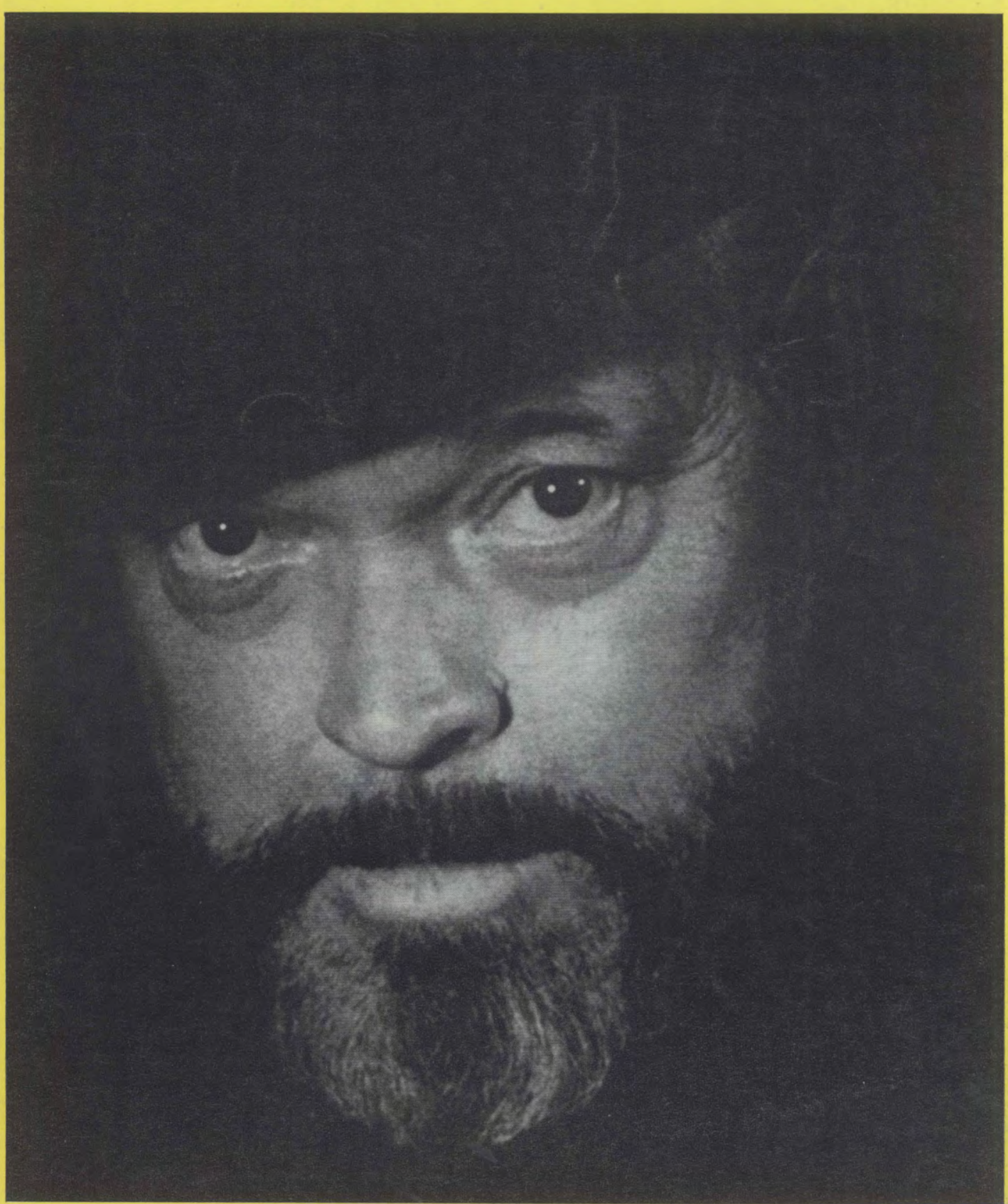
SIGHT AND SOUND

INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

SUMMER 1975



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On the cover: Orson Welles in 'F. for Fake'

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THE PASSENGER

Richard Roud

Writing about Michelangelo Antonioni's early films fifteen years ago, I said that 'the desolate autumnal wastes of the Po Valley through which Aldo aimlessly circles in *Il Grido*, the oppressive presence of the horizon, the perspectives which open on to infinity, are the exact reflection of Aldo's state of soul.' I see now that I got it the wrong way round. The *subject* of those sequences was in fact the desolate autumnal wastes, the oppressive horizon. These were the things that inspired Antonioni, and the plot of the film—including Aldo's state of soul—was an expression, so to speak, of the landscape, not the other way around.

In Antonioni's latest film *The Passenger* (or *Profession: Reporter*) there is a sequence which takes place on the roof of Gaudi's Hotel Milà in Barcelona. One of Gaudi's most complex constructions, this multi-levelled roof is dotted with groups of chimney-stacks, ventilators and stair-wells. Maria Schneider is on one side, Jack Nicholson on the other, and when they try to come together they find that, although it looks as if they could walk straight across to each other, they actually have to follow a sinuous and complicated route: up, down and around. This sequence may have been in Mark Peploe's original story, or in the script (credited to Peploe, Peter Wollen and Antonioni), but I doubt it. I don't think that this sequence arose from anyone's desire to find an analogy for the difficulty which the two characters have in communicating; rather, I feel sure that the roof itself suggested the scene, and in doing so enriched Antonioni's—and our—perception of the characters.

Even if the scene was there in the original story, it would only show how perceptively Peploe grasped the fact that Antonioni is inspired by figures in a landscape. For that, it now seems to me, is what his best films are essentially about. Not alienation, not the problems of love in an industrial society, not revolution; although these elements may all be part of the landscape. But what seems most to excite Antonioni is that problem confronted by all Italian painters, from the great Venetians onwards: how to place figures in a meaningful relation to a landscape. It can be an active urban setting, as in *The Eclipse* or *La Notte*, or a remote and rocky one, as in *L'Avventura*. And often the most memorable scenes in his films are the closing ones: the hotel terrace at the end of *L'Avventura*, the *terrain vague* where the streetcars end in *The Eclipse*, and now the plaza in *The Passenger*. It seems as though these final tableaux are what generated the whole film, that the vision of such a scene retroactively created everything which leads up to it.

This is certainly the case in *The Passenger*. One can see the whole film, in a sense, as so much exposition, setting us up in order to allow him to shoot that ultimate sequence. But in order for me to describe that shot I, too, will have to set it up. By now, I suppose everyone knows that the film is about a reporter who decides to change his identity, to trade himself in for a different model. And in some ways it is a shame that we do know this, for the beginning of the film would otherwise be even more evocative, more mysterious. It begins, in fact, in a tiny African village on the edge of the desert. Jack Nicholson arrives in a Land Rover, trying to find his way to somewhere or something.

There follows a series of abortive conversations, half in French, half in English, ending in sign language. People seem to understand where he wants to go (even if we don't), and finally he is led to the desert itself. (Not a red one this time, but as Elsie Mendl once said of the Parthenon, pinky-beige.) A vast, formless expanse across which a mysterious figure riding a languid camel inscribes a path which somehow gives this empty waste a shape.

Nicholson by now has a guide. But to what? They leave the Land Rover and start on a five-hour hike. Before they reach their destination, the guide vanishes (in an ellipse: what else?) without us being any the wiser—except for a few words about arms and warriors. Nicholson goes back to the Land Rover and drives off—only to get hopelessly stuck in the sand. He kicks the wheels, pummels the fenders, and delivers himself of three lapidary phrases which have all the force of *Veni, vidi, vici*: 'Shit . . . All right . . . I don't care.' Which tells us all we need to know about the character at this point in his life.

We cut to a small hotel in a village: Nicholson arrives, exhausted, and goes to his room. But not before we have seen the hotel lobby and the camera has wandered (idly?) up an electric light cord covered with beetles. Dropping in on his next-door neighbour, he discovers that he is dead—presumably of a heart attack. Suddenly Moroccan flutes signal something. (There is hardly any other music in the film.) We see a ceiling fan whirring overhead. And then what seems to be a sound-only 'flashback' to a conversation of a preceding day between the two men, in which we learn their names (Nicholson is David Locke; the other a Mr. Robertson), and that Locke is a television reporter making a documentary on 'the guerrillas'. Robertson says nothing about his profession, except that it involves a lot of solitary travel.

The two men look very much alike, and the aural flashback continues as we cut to Locke switching passport photographs. The electric fan continues to whirr, and we see that a tape-recorder is also revolving. So it wasn't a flashback after all, just a replay. And at that moment the sound-only 'flashback' suddenly becomes a real flashback, and we see the two men from the rear on Locke's balcony. Locke turns off the recorder, and the flashback stops; so it *was* a tape of their conversation after all, but the tape memory somehow engendered the visual flashback. A conceit? Yes, and a fascinating one, especially since Antonioni has never been one to play about with time and memory in this way. There will be others, too, in the course of the film.

We are now ready for a larger slice of plot than one expects from an Antonioni film. Locke flies back to London (he is English, though raised in America) where he makes a surreptitious visit to his flat to pick up a few things. On the way he notices (and so do we, if we're sharp enough, because it's only a moment) Maria Schneider sitting on a bench in the Bloomsbury Centre development. (Antonioni somehow manages to make this unpromising concrete setting as beautiful as the Piazza del Popolo.) And then, off to Munich to pick up the threads of the new life he has assumed. There he discovers that Robertson was—and consequently he himself now is—an idealistic gun-runner. Characteristically, this discovery comes to him in a church (the film is littered with churches) which he enters from the graveyard side and in which a wedding is being celebrated.

Back in London, meanwhile, Locke's widow, Rachel, suddenly discovers that although she and Locke had not been close for some years, she cares about her husband now that he is dead. When she tells her lover this, he sneeringly replies, 'Well, if you try hard enough, perhaps you can reinvent him.' And this remark is the signal for her subsequent course of action.

But she has already embarked on her rediscovery of Locke. During the wedding sequence in Munich we have been given a few mysterious flashbacks: Locke in his London garden, burning autumn leaves, and Rachel watching him from an upstairs window. Then, a few moments later, we cut back to London with Rachel—*now*, presumably—watching the same garden from the same upstairs window, raking over the past. It is another and more complex example of the games Antonioni plays with time and space. While Locke is being 'wedded' to his new occupation and life, he cannot help remembering his last marriage; and we can take the view of Rachel looking sadly out of the window as his idea of what she must be doing, or we can take it as what she is actually doing. It works either way.

In Munich, Locke is given an itinerary and is even provided with a putative girl friend—'Give my regards to Daisy' says one of the contacts. The first stop on his

'The Passenger': the roof of Gaudi's Hotel Milà, where Maria Schneider and Jack Nicholson meet for the second time in Barcelona

'The Passenger': Jack Nicholson

itinerary is Barcelona, which we see him entering, as it were, on a cable car coming down the mountain. He talks to an old man in the cable car, to another old man in a park, and to Maria Schneider in a Gaudi building. She (annoyingly for reviewing purposes, her character is never named) tells him that she is an architecture student. He tells her, 'I used to be someone else, but I traded him in.' 'People disappear every day,' she says; to which he replies, 'Yes, every time they leave the room.' A remark which to me brought far-off echoes of Eliot's *The Family Reunion*: 'Shall we ever meet again?/And who will meet again? Meeting is for strangers/Meeting is for those who do not know each other.' And indeed, passengers are people along for the ride, and *Passenger* is about people who do not know each other or themselves. Schneider does not know Locke, and she did not know Robertson; Locke didn't know Robertson, and he doesn't know Schneider; Rachel didn't know Locke; no one knows anyone. 'We do not like to look out of the same window,' said Eliot, 'and see quite a different landscape.' But that is precisely what happens to the characters in the film. Rachel looked out of her upstairs window and did not see the burning branches; Nicholson leaves a Munich café to enter a Barcelona cable car.

Throughout the film, we see 16mm. colour footage of African events—which turns out to be bits of the film that Rachel and her friend Martin, a TV producer, are putting together as a memorial to Locke (re-inventing him). In the course of making the film, they learn of the existence of Robertson —the last person, as they assume, to have seen Locke alive—and they decide to track him down to learn more about David's last hours. But when Rachel picks up Locke's effects at the unnamed African embassy in London, she notices that the picture on his passport is not of her 'late' husband.

By this time, however, Locke and Schneider have left Barcelona; we see them first at a roadside café in a scene which might have come from one of Antonioni's Italian films. The café is separated from the Mediterranean by a road, and their desultory conversation is punctuated by the sharp swish of passing cars. Nothing of importance is said, but the scene is one of those privileged moments that Antonioni does so well—like the one at the small airport in *The Eclipse*—a moment of introspective grace. And then the next stop on the itinerary: the Plaza de la Iglesia (another church!) in a place which is very much like the abandoned fascist town in *L'Avventura*. No one ever turns up at these rendezvous, and their odyssey is only interrupted by Antonioni's cutting back to London and to the mosaic of Locke's life that Rachel and Martin are putting together. But Locke is tired of his new life and wants to drop it. Schneider has to try to walk out on him for him to agree to go on with the quest.

Rachel arrives in Spain and almost catches them in a hotel lobby. The police are after them (on Rachel's account) and they are also being pursued by agents of the African government which the guerrillas are fighting. All the nets are tightening, but Schneider persuades Locke to keep going: 'Robertson believed in something. That's what you wanted isn't it?'—'But he's dead'—'But you're not.' And Locke gives in, on condition that they split up for safety's sake: they will rendezvous again in three days in Tangiers.

He goes alone to the Hotel de la Gloria in a small town, and there he is told that Mrs. Robertson has already checked in. Mrs. Robertson is of course Schneider. We are now almost at the beginning of the great final sequence, but a few points must first be made. Locke tells her about a blind man who was finally cured at the age of forty. At first he was elated, but slowly he began to get depressed. Nobody had ever told him about the dirt and ugliness in the world. When he was blind, he would cheerfully cross the street; now he stayed home more and more, frightened to go out. After three years he killed himself. As the camera moves up the electric light cord in this hotel, too, Locke explodes: 'What the hell are you doing here with me. You'd better go.' And she leaves.

Now the scene is set. Locke is lying on the bed in his ground-floor room; the camera is pointed past him at the window. On the window are wrought-iron bars; beyond the window is a huge square. It is almost empty; there is only an old man sitting against the wall that closes off the perspective. Slowly the camera begins to move. It moves past Nicholson, towards the window. We see a driving school car circling clumsily and aimlessly round the square; someone is practising. Schneider crosses the frame from lower right to upper left. Music begins: a pasodoble. A little boy in red passes by and throws something (a stone?) at the old man. A car arrives, with a black man and a white one. (Are they the agents of the African state?) A girl in red walks to the right; a dog crosses the frame to the left. Schneider reappears in frame. A man talks to her; the men move towards lower right, then laterally left, then towards upper right.

The camera has almost reached the bars on the window. Another car drives up; we move closer. Schneider talks to the old man. Sirens begin to wail. And then, with an effect of exaltation and surprise only comparable to that of the resurrection scene in *Ordet*, we pass through the narrow bars of the window. And it's not just the trickery that is exciting: we feel we are setting off on a fantastic voyage with no knowledge of where and when and how it will end—except that we feel it must end with death. At the same time there is a sense of liberation; we don't know what lies in wait for us out there, but we know that we are leaving something behind for ever. So, in a sense, the comparison with the resurrection scene in *Ordet* —which simply popped into my mind—is relevant; only this time it will be more an ascension than a resurrection.

The police are there; a crowd of kids appears. Then the camera begins to inscribe a movement in the shape of the (Greek) letter omega. That is to say, it tracks out and then to the left following Schneider, and when it reaches the back of the square it circles right, again following her. Meanwhile more police cars arrive, this time with Rachel and her producer friend. We continue right, and then slowly curve back towards the entrance of the Hotel de la Gloria. When we reach the façade, the camera moves laterally along it as Rachel and Schneider go inside. As we move along the façade towards Locke's window, they (invisibly) go down the corridor to his room. And the camera comes to a stop only when it has reached the wrought-iron bars of his window. Inside Locke is still lying on the

bed, but he is now dead. Presumably he has been shot by the men trailing Robertson. Rachel bends over him and says, 'I never knew him.' Schneider says, '*I* do.'

Cut to the façade of the hotel from the square. Night is falling, the sign is illuminated, the old man walks away, and the credits begin to roll up. The film is over.

Schneider and Nicholson at the roadside café: 'a moment of introspective grace'

The long detour is over: Antonioni has come home. All my reservations about his last three films—which were also his first colour films—had melted away in that extraordinary seven minute shot. And any reservations that I might have had about *Passenger* itself suddenly seemed less important. I still find its political meanderings not very effective, since it is impossible to put across generalised political messages: unnamed and therefore unreal countries in which guerrillas (good) and government (bad) are fighting can hardly evoke more than stock responses. There are some reservations about the schematic nature of the plotting: Rachel and Martin's dashing about Spain is rather seriously undermotivated, and these sequences are in any case none too convincingly acted by Jenny Runacre and Ian Hendry. Reservations, too, about some of the contrivances: the all too recently white-painted (funeral?) coach in Munich, the waiting for Godot aspect of the quest for Daisy (who is she?), who naturally never appears. (Unless 'She' is she; and if so who cares?)

These things might be enough to swamp a lesser film, but Antonioni emerges triumphant. Why? Literally, because of his *mise-en-scène*, the way he places people on his stage, in landscapes, against buildings, in their physical context. Jack Nicholson succeeds (no easy task) in giving us Antonioni's first positive male protagonist. At first I suspected that he might be too realistically humanising an actor for Antonioni, but actually it is precisely the contrast inherent in his naturalistic way of playing a non-naturalistic role that makes the shadowy figure of Locke so effective. Nicholson does not play him as a cipher, nor does he over-personalise him, but strikes just the necessary balance between reality and abstraction. Maria Schneider, in an equally difficult role, succeeds as well: it is as if Antonioni were determined to show that she could be used in a way diametrically opposite to the way Bertolucci used her in *Last Tango*, and so she is all understatement, wan, pale, but with that residual toughness just visible.

The theme of the film is not related to these figures in the landscape in the same direct way as in Antonioni's Italian pictures (although Mediterranean architecture and landscapes do seem to suit him better than more exotic ones). There is in *The Passenger* a much less direct, less 'expressive' relationship. In fact, the theme of the film—the search for identity, for commitment—is expressed only glancingly, by ironic contrast. The more closely Antonioni relates his characters to their physical environment, the more dissociated from it they seem to be. The Hotel de la Gloria is a modest, simple hotel, much less flamboyant than the Gaudi buildings in Barcelona or the church in Munich. And the plaza is much less monumental than the Bloomsbury precincts in which nothing (except that first fleeting glimpse of Schneider) occurs. And indeed perhaps even the fuzziness of the political message, the vagueness of the aims of the gun-runner and the guerrillas, may be an ironic contrast to the almost religious importance which Antonioni gives to the Journey. One death in a tropical hotel room, another death in another tropical hotel room: these are the termini of the odyssey. And what has been accomplished between these two deaths? 'There was a birth, certainly/ We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,/But had thought they were different . . . I should be glad of another death.' (Eliot again, in *Journey of the Magi*.)

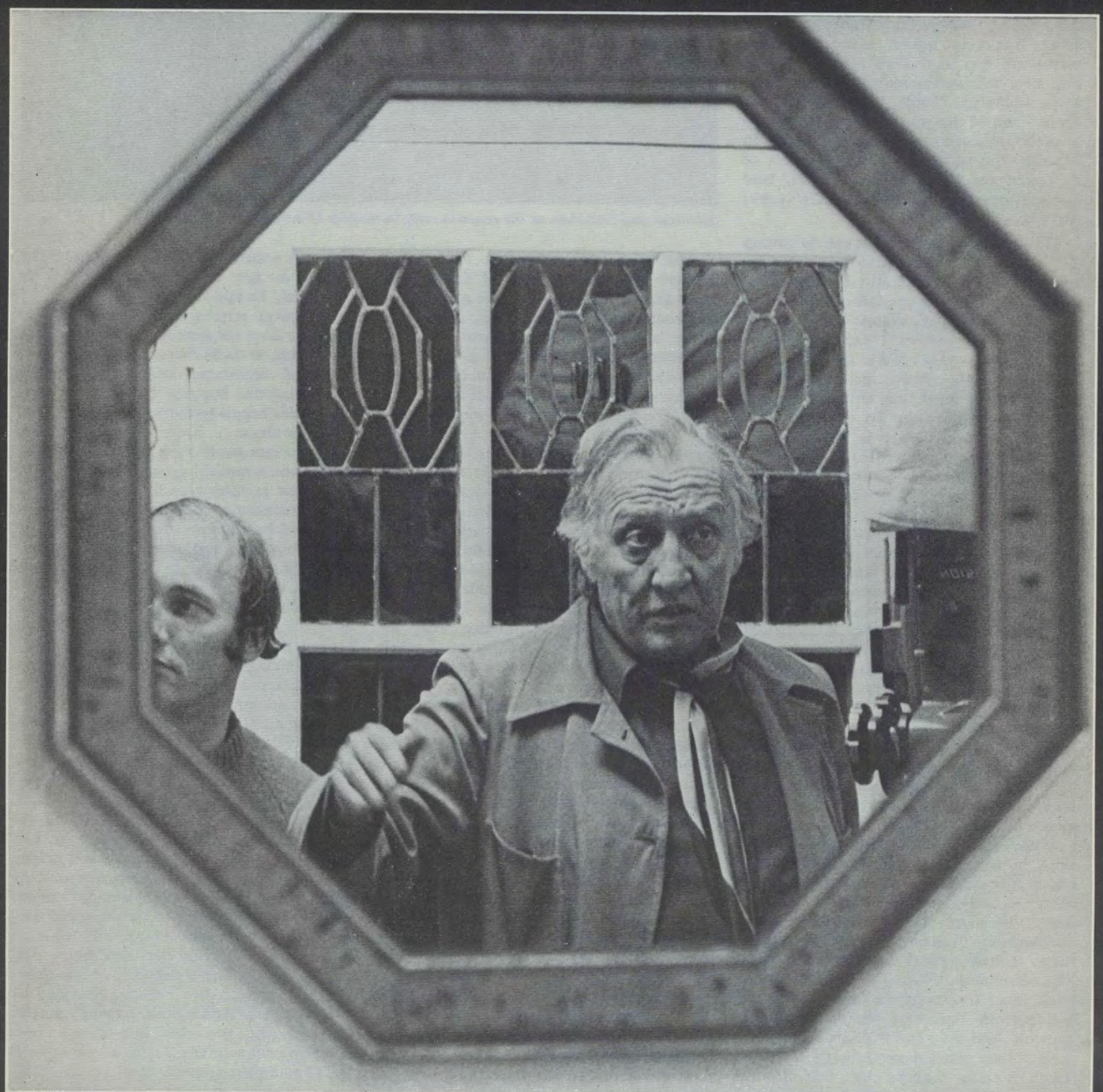
Conventionally, the Schneider character, the one who speaks up for life and youth, is the one we are supposed to take as 'right'; but the way the film is made leads me to believe that although Antonioni may intellectually side with her, poor Locke's rebirth as Robertson in one hotel room could only end in 'Robertson's' death in another. In, however, the Hotel de la Gloria.

Writing about Antonioni's use of the camera fifteen years ago, I mentioned 'his autonomous and non-functional use of camera movement to create spatial patterns which are satisfying in their own right . . . He proposes to us a formal choreography of movement which accompanies the film, providing a non-conceptual figure in the carpet, an experience in pure form.' And that I'll stick by, even though many insist that there can be no such thing as pure form. But there has to be, or else Antonioni's films wouldn't work. However intelligent he may be, he is not an 'intellectual' director. However much ideas may interest him, they do not inspire him. However interested in people he may be, psychology is less important in his films than we have thought. However committed politically he may be, he is not a director of political films. ('The cinema is not in essence moral; it is emotional,' he said recently.)

The plaza sequence at the end of *The Passenger* does not bear directly on the ideas of the film, or on its theme. The theme is its point of departure, and its end-point. Everything that happens between the time the camera begins to move and the time that it stops is about . . . itself. The great painters were concerned with light and shade, colour, texture and composition; and so is Antonioni. The great architects and town-planners of the Renaissance and the Baroque were interested in scale and the relationships of bodies, buildings and space; so is Antonioni. But unlike them, he can also define space through movement and sound, and all the more tellingly now that he has settled down to colour, since it has stopped monopolising his concern to the extent it did in *Red Desert*, *Blow-Up* and *Zabriskie Point*. Antonioni no longer paints the scenery; and the essential architecture emerges more clearly.

There are three slightly different versions of *The Passenger* (for commercial reasons). The one I saw lasted 125 minutes, and those 125 minutes, those 7,500 seconds each with its 24 frames, those 180,000 images and compositions, are conjugated with movement, dialogue and sound into a unique perceptual experience. This may sound like a minor achievement or a sterile exercise—but to me it was a more meaningful, more exhilarating experience of the world we live in than the colour-dominated (colour-destroyed) and trendy last three films, and more cinematic than the more 'psychological' first five. Architecture has been described as frozen music. Antonioni's moving camera unfreezes it, and this non-linear, non-narrative thaw pours forth a cascade of sound and images, spatial music. ■

The Country of the Past Revisited



LOSEY, GALILEO AND THE ROMANTIC ENGLISH-WOMAN

'Galileo': Topol as Galileo

Richard Combs

In an eight month period last year, Joseph Losey completed two films: one, *Galileo*, was the realisation of a project that he had tried to set up intermittently for more than a quarter of a century; the other, *The Romantic Englishwoman*, is a throwback of another kind, a return to the country that he has known best, the peculiar beauties and the special confinements of a landscape and a society that were perhaps most closely described in *Accident*. Having tied off one area of the past with *Galileo*, and returned to another with what he describes as the 'accident' of the second film, Losey's hopes for the future—among them Harold Pinter's Proust adaptation, and a project structured on Brechtian lines to do with the history of the Arab world—promise as many convulsions in subject matter and style as they do new combinations of Losey, the man of the theatre and the man of the cinema.

When I interviewed Losey, I had not seen either of his two new films. *The Romantic Englishwoman* was then still in the post-production stage. 'It's not only difficult but inadvisable for me to talk about a film I haven't finished, because I don't know what it is yet,' Losey said. 'I can talk about the processes but I can't talk about the result.'

JOSEPH LOSEY: This is a curious point in my life, in terms of work, because *Galileo* is a throwback to twenty-seven years ago—I did the play in Hollywood and New York in 1947. *The Romantic Englishwoman* was something that more or less happened by accident, and the project that I most want to do—I've been working on it now for four years—is the Proust film. But with inflation it has become so expensive that very few people are willing to consider it. I can probably get every actor in the world into it; it has all the elements that those people normally consider commercial—sex and perversity and romance and poetry and pageantry and beauty and sadism and nostalgia. But they think it's not commercial, partly because it's Proust and partly because they haven't read it or haven't understood it. So I feel that I'm between the past accident and the future, which is Proust for me: that's the only real development I can see in my own work at this moment.

Is it at all close to being set up?

No, it's not close, except that we have the screenplay, which is a major accomplishment, and we have a lot of people interested. Harold Pinter has written a script which I consider the most brilliant film script that anyone has ever written. But it started out at five million dollars and it's now up to eight million, without any change in the script. I'm working on the possibility of a television series on *The Magic Mountain*, and I'm exploring a possible film about what led up to the present Arab crisis. I'm going back to Dartmouth, where I was at university, to teach this summer, and I'm talking for the first time in many years about theatre. But I always hold out hopes for the Proust project, and I think they are probably pretty realistic. It's a script that somebody has to do some time, and if it's not me who does it, I hope it's Pinter. The rights to the script will revert to him and me soon. The Proust rights themselves are held at the moment in the combination that we're part of; soon they revert to the estate, and shortly afterwards they come into the public domain. But I don't think that anybody will ever try to compete with this script. They can't; there just couldn't be a better one.

How close is *Galileo* to the way you originally planned it?

Back in 1947 Laughton and Brecht and I all wanted to do it as a film, though we never got down to thinking about how it would be done because we were still in the midst of the play production. That didn't come off, partly because of the Catholic church. Then about 1961 I got a couple of million dollars to do the production, by which time Brecht was dead and Laughton . . . well, he was ill, and also he had run to the FBI and sort of renounced any connection with it, me or Brecht. I went to see Brecht's widow in Germany. She was intent on having it done only in the most perfect conditions, and shortly after that she sold it to Paramount for $100,000, without conditions. Paramount spent a lot of money on various scripts, directors and actors, and of course never made it. Then the rights reverted and Ely Landau bought it for very little, and brought it to me.

In 1961 I had been planning to make it on location in Italy. So of course the film as it ended up was very different, and it required a convulsion. It was done on one composite set, one huge set on the biggest stage at EMI. I'm not sure whether it would be called expressionist, or whether it would simply be called stylised. Richard Macdonald has worked with me, off and on, for twenty-three years. We think pretty well along the same lines, and he understood that what I wanted was texture. And that I wanted suggestions rather than literal or naturalistic reproductions. So he did architectural suggestions, using wood and metal and stone. Of course it isn't the same thing as real texture, yet it's pretty close. We shot the ballet on a separate stage, and the so-called recantation scene was done on another stage, simply set against a highly reflected back screen. So we used three stages in all, but two of them we only used for two days.

I think Brecht would like this film very much. I'm considerably astonished, and a bit disturbed, by the fact that a number of people seem to be put off by Topol's performance, which they find too warm. I think the word used is 'benign', which Galileo certainly wasn't; and I don't think Topol is either. One can have a wrong perspective, one can see a performance quite differently from the way an audience sees it; but I think Topol has done a remarkable job. There are flaws in the performance, there are flaws in the film—but there were, God knows, flaws in Laughton's performance too. And while Laughton was perhaps more malicious, more sly, and certainly never benign, he was weak—Galileo was weak,

'Galileo': in the Vatican, Galileo abolishes heaven

that's correct, and so is Topol weak, but Laughton was weak in weaker ways.

Your conception of the play must have changed over the years.

I think it developed; I think it matured a good deal. As it did of course with Brecht: he rewrote it four or five times, and took bits and pieces from all the different versions.

I must say the film was a very enjoyable way of working. We were working a six-day week and I was cutting as I went along, and I was so tired that I actually fell asleep on my feet once during a take. There were eighty-six speaking parts, a ballet, songs, titles—it is, in every sense of the word, a big production—and I shot it in four and a half weeks. I began *Galileo* in May last year, and I finished shooting *The Romantic Englishwoman* just before Christmas. That was shot out of the season in which it was written, and I had to make it out of continuity, doing the middle section first, the end next and the beginning last.

You made some changes from Thomas Wiseman's novel.

What interested me most about it were the various points of view—the fantasy of the husband about his wife, the fantasy of the wife about herself, plus the catalyst of the poet, who says very little but is the only one who really has an articulate philosophy. Wiseman did an original script with me which was interesting and good in many ways, but like many novelists he was inclined to put into the script purple descriptions that are not so easily translated into the visual. Then Tom Stoppard took it and treated it with a good deal of irreverence and made it quite funny. He hardly changed the structure, except that he injected a bit more of the adventurer into the poet, but he largely rewrote the dialogue. It's a pretty bitter comedy of domestic life, and it could be like a more conventional *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*; considerably more conventional, I'm afraid. I persuaded Tom Stoppard with some difficulty, because he said that this is just the kind of thing he detests. But that was fine, that was exactly the way to do it, because taking something that he detested, he brought out all the best things in it.

The book is largely written from the viewpoint of the novelist husband. In fact, Wiseman makes extended use of a literary device, establishing the writer as the controlling presence who creates the other characters and is then gradually hounded by them as they take over his fictions.

In the film, we've made it clear that he's a pretty bad writer. He's not a bad person, and in fact he comes out rather well, but he's basically a successful pulp writer who believes his own fiction. For all his philosophising, he's a man who doesn't really create life but simply sets it down as he sees it, which of course is an immediate distortion because he doesn't see it with any degree of perspective. In the film he's not writing a book but a screenplay, about what he imagines happened to his wife in Baden Baden. There are a few illustrations of the screenplay, and they're all very Hollywood, very glittery and lush and overblown.

How have you dealt with the business of the novelist's relationship with the other two characters, both as real people and as characters in his own fiction, the switches of viewpoint and interior monologue?

There is no interior monologue at all. You see a woman in a situation, and the man projected rather ambiguously into some kind of relationship with her which you're not quite sure about, and then the husband is introduced. You see the domestic situation, and then you see this stranger more or less accidentally reappearing in their lives and being invited in by the writer for his sexual and pseudo-creative purposes. Then the wife turning that into a reality; and then the total necessity for everyone to confront this rather grubby reality.

Whom do you take to be the focal character?

I think the most interesting character is the poet. He comes out with more dignity at the end; he dismisses the others. He is someone who's totally free of bourgeois life, whereas they're totally trapped in it. There's a marvellous Tom Stoppard line, on the first night at the house when the poet has had a very good tea and a very good dinner but hasn't yet been invited to spend the night. He has been offered cigars and brandy, and the husband says, 'So bourgeois life does have its compensations.' And the poet says, 'What would it be without them?' The poet is represented in the film at the end as being nothing. There's nothing in his bag; there are just some notebooks on which there are a few scribbled lines, but most of the pages are empty.

I think that Wiseman in the novel is extremely unfair to the woman, and probably unfair to the poet. In the film the poet comes off best and the novelist next best and the woman worst; and I'm sorry in a way that it works out like this, because I'm not—in spite of my reputation—anti-woman.

Did the development of her part have any connection in your mind with *A Doll's House*?

Yes, but not in the way I wanted. I like *A Doll's House*, although the experience was not a very good one, and I didn't want to do anything after *A Doll's House* that could contribute to the wrong ideas about it. But the point of view which is in both the film and the novel is that the romantic Englishwoman was voracious—she wanted everything, and her idea of romance was total bourgeois consumption of man.

In the book, the husband obviously sees himself as a romantic novelist in the nineteenth century tradition, which you've put in quite a different context. How do you see this in relation to the statement you've made that you're basically a romantic?

I've said jokingly that I'm a romantic Marxist. I never meant romantic straight, and I think I was talking in terms of weaknesses not strength. And I'm quite sure that Tom Wiseman's title is ironic, as the film is ironic in relation to the title: if ever there was an unromantic woman, it's this one. In fact, it's a weakness of me and Thomas Wiseman and a lot of other people; you're trying to be realists in a systematised world, and you've been given a bourgeois romantic upbringing and education, and so you are in conflict all the time . . .

It's probably wrong to talk about it before I know whether it works, but there is one thing in *The Romantic Englishwoman* . . . In the scenes in the house at Weybridge (it's Weybridge in the film, not Hampstead), almost every sequence involves a mirror or a reflection, because I wanted to convey that their reality was totally unreal. I said that I was going to use mirrors to death in the house, and that I wouldn't use them anywhere outside it—and I succeeded until I got to the Baden Baden casino, where there were so many mirrors that there was no way of avoiding them.

What is the Arab project you mentioned?

I don't know how, or why, or through whom, but some of the better people in the Arab world came to me and asked if I would make a film about the Arab man, Arab destiny. Largely because of the character of

the people involved, I got interested, and I'm now trying to see if I can work anything out. I'm working with a young Algerian writer called Yacine Kateb, who has written some extraordinary plays and novels, to see if we can do a kind of Brechtian structure. We'll see what comes of it. I want him in this case to give me a kind of play structure and really do something with it in a filmic way. To make it as extreme as possible, I said, let's have something the equivalent of the boys' chorus in *Galileo* as a connective, and then let's have a series of cumulative but disconnected episodes which will permit us to explore a whole expanse of history cinematically. The chorus can be theatrical and the rest can be naturalistic cinema. And let's make it poetic, and let's put it together with a ballad, if possible. His first idea of a chorus will probably scare people to death: he suggested it should consist of Jesus Christ, Moses and Mohammed, who sing their ballad as they sweep the sands of Saudi Arabia to the north; but the wind blows them back to the south faster than they can sweep to the north.

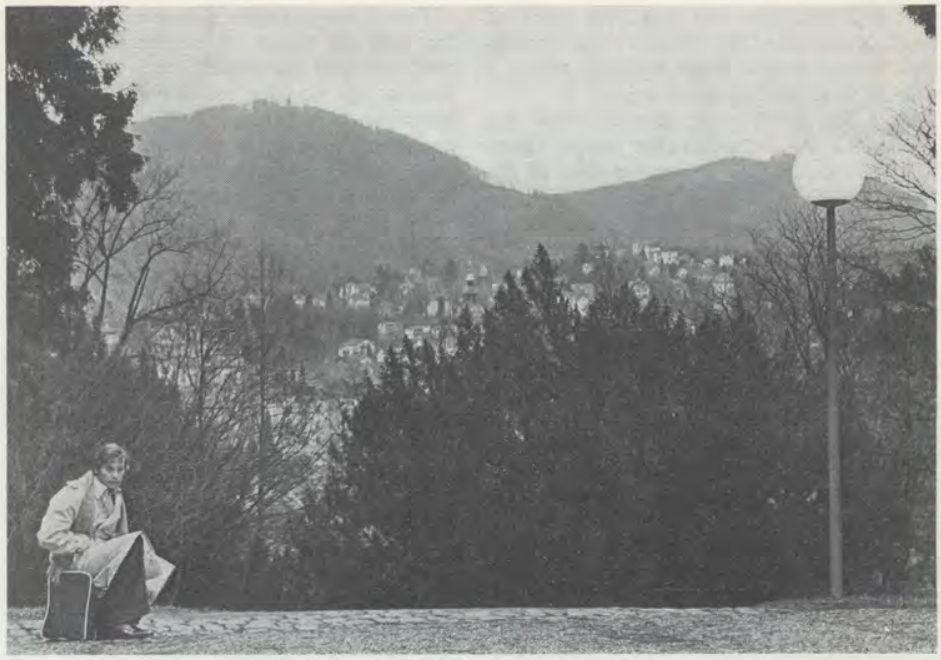


Figure in a landscape: Helmut Berger and Baden Baden in a lonely moment from 'The Romantic Englishwoman'

It has seemed that the development of your films generally has been towards greater stylisation, a refining away of detail.

I think that's true. In a curious way, I have hopes that I perhaps otherwise wouldn't have for *The Romantic Englishwoman*. I was less personally involved than on some of the other films, I didn't have to conduct the same kind of personal battles, and consequently I found that I could cut much more ruthlessly. The first cut, which was far from being a rough cut, was 145 minutes, and the film is now 116 minutes. I don't think I could ever have done that before.

Do you think this refinement has anything to do with what you were saying earlier about going back to the theatre?

Maybe. On the other hand, of course, *Galileo* is two and a half hours . . . Judith Crist said that it looked like a documentary that had somehow got through, having by-passed the cutting room. Well, it certainly isn't a documentary and it hasn't by-passed the cutting room. I think it has been very tightly cut. It has respected the text, so that there are a lot of words, but I think that even *Galileo* is much tighter than most of my previous films.

Part of the problem with *The Assassination of Trotsky* seemed to be the difficulty of achieving this level of concentration when you had so much diverse material to cram in.

The *Trotsky* script was a problem. It came originally from Ian Hunter, who is a Hollywood writer and was one of the blacklisted people; and that script didn't work. Then Nicholas Mosley came in, and wrote and rewrote, and then I injected all kinds of factual material. That was a script which was in work until the last day of shooting. I also assumed when I went into it, perhaps because he had been such an important part of my life, that everyone knew who Trotsky was—that people at least knew about his role in the Russian revolution. And I very quickly found that most people didn't know at all. As I'm now finding out with some other projects, hardly anyone of the post-war generation knows anything about the people who were important during the period of the war, even Hitler. So I then tried to cram a lot of ideological material into those tapes to give some idea of the background. And I also started out with a technical idea, that I could project images of the Russian revolution on to the walls of the garden. Still keep it as a confined thing, but have all kinds of floating images out of the past working within that confined story. It simply, mechanically, didn't work, though I spent a lot of money trying to do it. The only thing that's left of it is the image of Stalin in the water.

You've said that your view of Trotsky changed while you were making the film. How do you think your political beliefs have evolved generally?

I've become less political. I suppose that's a kind of development. I have a great desire to be informed, and a great desire not to be organisational, whereas previously I suppose I was more interested in being organisational than in being informed. As I've said many times, to the point of tedium, I think that the function of films is to provoke, disturb and stimulate thought, so that there can be change. I don't think that films necessarily have to indicate change, as long as they can produce the energies that will do it. But it's not a very encouraging world, is it? I must say I've had a pretty strenuous life, and a pretty long one, and I don't think I have ever known a time quite as bleak as the present. Even the Depression was better, because we were going to beat it. At the moment, nobody has any kind of feeling that they're going to beat it.

The character of the assassin in *Trotsky* is almost a blank. You create this figure of great nervous energy, and he's like a character who is just happening, trying to find his definition in his act . . .

I find characters like that very interesting. Actually, the poet in *The Romantic Englishwoman* is the same kind. He has almost nothing to say, he is almost totally an observer, his appears to be the least of the three parts, and for me he comes out more strongly than anyone else in the film. You don't know any more about him when the film is over than you did before, except that you know he is someone who will take care of himself in whatever way he has to, whereas the others probably will not . . .

I think it's quite an interesting film, and I particularly like the end of it. Before the woman goes off with the poet, she and her husband decide that they are leading rather a boring life, always seeing the same people, and decide to give a party to which they will invite all the people they don't know. The poet goes off to something which is almost certainly going to be his death; and they return to the house to find this party going on, and their house completely overrun by people they don't know at all. And in the middle of the night, after this bleak, desperate occurrence in the South of France, they suddenly have to face their old life, full of new but the same people.

THE FILMS

'No one's virtue is complete; great Galileo likes to eat': the chorus introduction to scene two of Brecht's *Galileo* sets the tone for a satire on the cat and mouse games public authorities play with their exceptional citizens that is one of the most directly funny sequences of the play. Needing an increase in his stipend from the University of Padua to continue his researches, Galileo is advised to come up with some practical invention that will impress the city fathers. Having heard from one of his private pupils of the miraculous new telescope that is currently on display in Amsterdam, Galileo manufactures his own model and presents it as 'the product of seventeen years research' to the city's senators. ('I have improved it,' he whispers to the pupil. 'I see,' comes the reply, 'you have made the cover red.') While the dignitaries are admiring the view through the telescope, and considering the advantages of being able to sight an enemy fleet a full two hours before it can sight them, Galileo notes in an aside to his friend Sagredo that he has already made discoveries with this 'profitable toy'

that will overturn two thousand years of astronomy; one of the officials then remarks that it is a pity a great republic needs a pretext to reward its great men.

In a less iconoclastic context, there are similar ironies to the fact that Joseph Losey has now put on film, under the aegis of the American Film Theatre's scheme of producing filmed plays as cultural artefacts for a particular kind of art-house audience, the play which has been a large part of his life for three decades, and which was considered at the outset an impossible proposition as play or film. ('Unreadable and amateurish' is Losey's description of initial reactions; and he has recorded his irritation with the subsequent conversion of Brecht into such a fashionable, if still misunderstood, commodity.) That a screen version of *Galileo* should have finally come about at this stage of his career suggests the closing of a circle, and gives the image a special meaning.

Losey has said of his initial desire to do *Galileo* for the cinema that 'my theatre work was approaching film'; lately it has seemed that his film work was turning closer to theatre, both directly in terms of subject matter and style (the recent *Doll's House*, his hopes for a project on the Middle East situation that would be a historical saga employing Brechtian devices), and in an intensification of that peculiarly concentrated rendering of detail and gesture that has always been one of the signs of Losey's cinema. In this respect, *Galileo* offers some interesting parallels to one of Losey's most intriguing, problematic and least well-received ventures of recent years, *The Assassination of Trotsky*. *Galileo*, in a way, is almost the same project: an historical subject about a man of ideas who for a while stood at what might have been the beginning of the Brechtian concept of a 'New Age', an event forestalled on both occasions—in the case of Trotsky, by a series of historical accidents that consigned him to exile and the circumscribed world of his disciples, and in the case of Galileo, by the personal hesitations and final self-renunciation that condemned him to a similar fate and a more lingering kind of parole.

Losey was evidently frustrated by the fact that the nature of the Trotsky project confined him to dealing with the events leading up to the assassination; a bold technical experiment on his part to incorporate more of the historical background through documentary footage that would be used as a film-within-the-film proved unworkable. Brecht's *Galileo* offers the solution to many of the Trotsky film's problems. Its episodic structure, ranging over most of Galileo's creative life, presents the different faces of its subject in paradigmatic scenes (an approach uncomfortably embedded in the script of *Trotsky*, with Nicholas Mosley's concept of a 'Janus-faced' Trotsky); and it firmly skirts the dramatic 'highpoint' of Galileo's recantation before the Inquisition, spelling out the historical implications of the event through the anguished expectations of those friends and family closest to him, balanced between religious dread and scientific optimism. The scene then closes with an exchange that perfectly puts into perspective the cruel absurdity of a situation which places such historical responsibility on the shoulders of one man. Andrea Sarti, Galileo's most devoted apprentice, greets his defeated master with the taunt, 'Unhappy is the land that has no heroes,' which Galileo amends to, 'Unhappy is the land that needs a hero.'

At nearly two-and-a-half hours, *Galileo* is faithful almost scene by scene to the play; such deletions as there are—the horseplay between the young Andrea and the nine-year-old Cosimo de Medici before Galileo's introduction to the Florentine court, the very last scene depicting Andrea's escape across the border with the 'Discorsi'—serve to keep the focus of the film even more tightly fixed on its central character. That Losey's treatment works as well as it does is a tribute both to his belief in the adaptability of the author ('it has always seemed to me that Brecht is very close to film') and to the clarity and simplicity with which he has followed Brecht's own prescriptions for the staging. 'The actions must be carried through smoothly and with detailed forethought. Incessant changes of position by trivial movements of the characters must be avoided . . . The audience must be sure that someone walking, someone standing up, a gesture, all have meaning and deserve attention.' Applying the rule as closely to camera movement as to his actors, Losey strikes a deceptively easy balance between exposition and expressiveness in his treatment of the text.

The opening scene introduces Galileo at his most ebullient and inspired, declaring at length to Andrea how his proofs of Copernican astronomy will destroy forever the old earth-centred, Ptolemaic model of the universe; yet the emphasis of the scene remains firmly on the peculiarly vigorous, physical nature of Galileo's excitements, in science as in everything. ('Even his thinking is sensual,' as Pope Urban VIII later comments.) Topol's performance is also effective largely to the degree to which he can infuse fire and a range of emotion into Galileo's passion for science, even with the single-mindedness, veiled by a self-protective cunning, with which the astronomer pursues his research in the middle years. With the decline into a closely restricted old age, the actor misses a necessary sourness and depth of bitterness in Galileo's self-denunciation.

But the best scenes, ironically, are the two in which Galileo is most conspicuous by his absence, and in which the various moral, social and political implications which he trails willy nilly while fulfilling his passion are picked up and elaborated into threatening designs by other characters. The investiture of Pope Urban VIII, previously Cardinal Barberini, the churchman-mathematician in whom Galileo hoped to find a champion against the religious establishment, proceeds like the steady winding up of a mechanism which must inevitably overtake and crush Galileo. As his robes of office are one by one draped about him, and to the accompaniment of an incessant background shuffle of line upon line of the faithful who have come to hear his verdict on the heretic, Barberini's protests on Galileo's behalf slowly give way to the arguments of the Cardinal Inquisitor (Edward Fox, ageing better than Topol and most menacing as this most lethal tool of the church in an earlier scene where he makes light of the issues with Galileo's daughter). Fox's Cardinal is a red-cloaked figure, moving, walking and talking with the precision of a calculated attack, and his words combine with the slow susurration of feet outside the chamber to wear away like a water torture at the Pope's resolve not to surrender Galileo to the Inquisition.

Stylistically and emotionally, the most intense scene is that taking place during Galileo's crucial interview with the Inquisition. The setting is virtually reduced to a bare stage, with the character known as the Little Monk and the glass-grinder Federzoni hunched over a game of chess, while Andrea waxes optimistic and pessimistic by turns in anticipating the outcome of the trial, and Galileo's daughter, kneeling on a dais to one side, prays that her father will recant and be saved from damnation. A bright white backdrop plays peculiar tricks with perspective and lends the actors huge, looming shadows to drag behind them. The delivery of the scene works itself up to a pitch of frenzy when the hour approaches

'The talk of the market-place': ballet in 'Galileo'

for the striking of the bell that will announce Galileo's submission, and a world truly seems to be hanging in the balance.

Losey and Richard Macdonald have also adhered to the letter of Brecht's instructions on the details of a setting that will suggest a 'historical ambience' but 'does not obtrude itself with vivid colours, but rather sets off the costumes of the actors and intensifies the plasticity of the figures by itself remaining two-dimensional.' Galileo's immediate environment, the physical artefacts of his life and work (like the Ptolemaic globe, or the contraption later devised for studying sun spots) are closely, palpably, a presence in every scene; a simple backdrop arrangement (the mast of a ship gently waving, a painted skyline) effectively lends an air of comic-strip pageant to such scenes as the presentation of the telescope to the Padua council.

Also using the simplest and most direct means to achieve the required distance from the central character on the part of the audience, and to provide an explicit presentation of content, Losey has Topol turn to the camera from time to time to make the necessary points ('Astronomy will become the talk of the market-place and the sons of fishwives will go to school') and plays the credits over shots of the various sets framed by lights and camera equipment. The excitement created in the world at large—and the brief possibility of more than just astronomy being turned topsy-turvy—by the spread of Galileo's ideas is colourfully conjured in the market-place song and ballet. The scene suggests that Losey was tinkering with a similar effect in the May Day parade which opened *Trotsky*; and a further, idiosyncratic line of commentary appears in the anachronistic placards which are jiggled on high in the riotous procession which ends the ballet: 'The Pope No', 'Galileo Yes' and 'The Earth Moves'.

Galileo clearly offers a body of themes and attitudes, revolving round questions of choice and responsibility, of the intricate web of consequences that connect every individual act of free will to the deterministic patterns that shape other lives, as pertinent to Losey's work now as they were twenty-seven years ago. The problem of *The Romantic Englishwoman* is not that its concerns are peripheral to his own, but that Losey and his collaborator, playwright Tom Stoppard, only manage to approach what they find of interest through the periphery of Thomas Wiseman's book, ignoring as far as possible the nebulously extended but all-embracing literary device at its centre.

The basic plot of the book actually offers, with beguiling simplicity, the ground rules for an archetypal Losey movie. Into the lives of a not-too-happily married couple, an egoistic and compulsively dominating writer and his restless, quietly desperate wife, is injected an unsettling presence; a young poet whom the wife met at a hotel in Baden Baden (and with whom she may or may not have slept), and who turns the speculative fiction that the husband weaves round their situation into reality by eventually taking off with his wife. Beset by guilt that the aspirations he has ascribed to his wife have driven her into a 'disease of romanticism', the husband pursues the couple; the poet eventually meets an obscurely fateful end and the wife is restored to her spouse, who

'The Romantic Englishwoman': Helmut Berger, Glenda Jackson

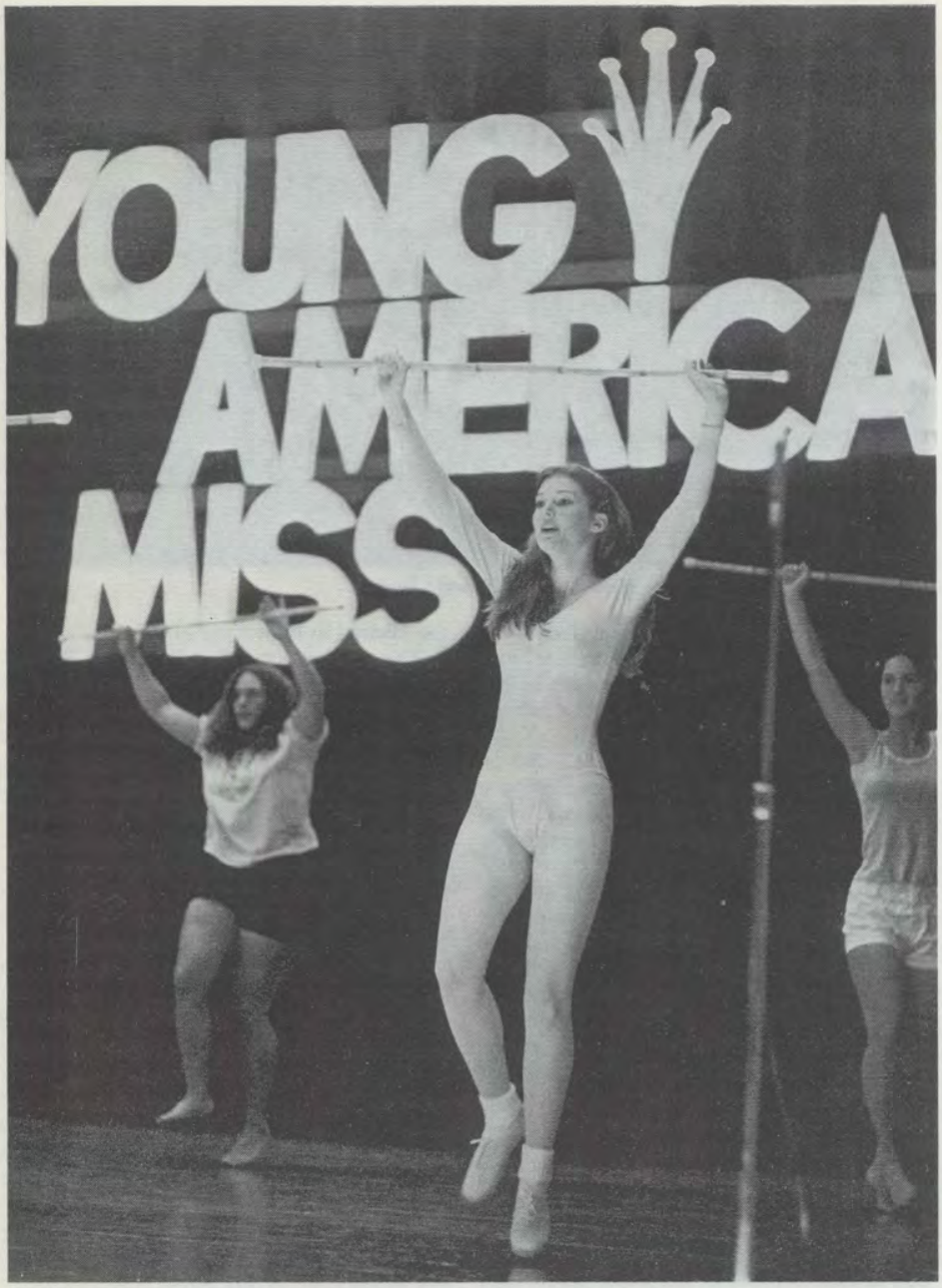
is relieved to have saved her from the independence to choose her own life, and her own romantic 'catastrophe', which he has consistently foisted upon her as the subject of his fictions.

The medium through which all this is filtered is the consciousness of the husband, who playfully accepts, but doesn't quite accept, responsibility for the roles he is handing out ('Madame Bovary, c'est moi,' he quotes to his wife at one point); and for all the passages devoted to her interior debate as to how she might achieve (and whether she really wants) her freedom, and the poet's unsparing, materialist reflections, the subject of the book remains the literary game of its principal character. 'Perhaps writing novels also serves some such end: to rehearse what one fears most, the enactment of it in words—a kind of reckless tempting of fate.'

Having largely stripped this framework from the film, Losey and Stoppard have correspondingly shrunk the presence and controlling consciousness of the novelist, so that he can be locked into the same analytical and critical context as the other characters. What emerges from this is such a condemnatory fierceness, at least in relation to the novelist and his wife, that the film is in danger of being reduced to something as clinical as an autopsy—an operation carried out with consummate skill in the way Losey traces the oppressive stresses of guilt and hypocrisy in this bourgeois household, and in the comedy-of-manners leavening of Tom Stoppard, but strangely, coldly automatic in its execution. Not only are the characters treated with a sardonic disdain, but other aspects of the subject, as derived from Wiseman, are similarly dissected and dismissed. Engaged in writing a screenplay, the husband, Lewis Fielding (Michael Caine), is first seen in conversation with his film's producer, during which he characterises the latter's suggestion for a women's liberation slant as 'pretentious and derivative—and boring'. Later Fielding roundly abuses a friend of his wife's who comes out with a phrase—'Woman is an occupied land'—that in the book is quoted by the wife. Thus the struggle of Elizabeth Fielding (Glenda Jackson) to free herself from her husband's fantasies (which now have something less than the Flaubert/Fitzgerald respectability of the book), is largely discarded as a subject too clichéd to be worthy of attention.

The design of *The Romantic Englishwoman* carries distinct and, at its best (the sure analysis of tensions in the Fielding home, the unstated but inescapable threat of the au pair's presence to Elizabeth), pleasing echoes of *Accident*. But Losey seems unable to extend to Elizabeth Fielding the sympathy that he had for the Vivien Merchant character in *Accident*; and even her eventual flight with Thomas, the poet, is seen less as an equivocally motivated romantic rebellion than as a kind of lust for further possession. The one character whom the adaptors are at some pains to redeem is Thomas (Helmut Berger), the outsider who has appeared through most of Losey's later work as the catalyst necessary to throw the old order into disarray before a new one can emerge (even if that tends simply to be a regrouping and retrenchment on old lines). In contrast to the other characters, Thomas' philosophy is implicit in what he is and what he does: an adventurer whose life is buttressed by neither the possessions nor the articulate self-deceptions of his hosts. But the background which the film-makers have supplied to fill out Wiseman's slightly bare sketch of the poet tends rather to work against this endorsement of his character. A drug trafficker of some kind, seen vaguely at work at various points in the movie and chased through most of it by vengeful colleagues (led by the dour Michel Lonsdale), Thomas too frequently seems a refugee from a slick little thriller. The way he is whisked off by his pursuers at the end is as much an unconvincing *deus ex machina* as Wiseman's more solemnly poetic contrivance.

Losey and Stoppard have provided a further, pointedly brief and sardonic ending of their own, in which Fielding and his wife are returned to their old (and their future) life. The pity is that, for all the savage, cerebral jokes, the director of *The Romantic Englishwoman* still seems cut off from the richness of implication and suggestion in his best work. Having cleared away a good deal of the vague indulgence in their original source, Losey and Stoppard have come dangerously close to writing off their subject. Perhaps the landscape of *Accident* is not so easily revisited; perhaps, as Losey himself suggests, he now needs the challenge of Proust. ■



'Smile'

REALIST IRONY:
The Films of Michael Ritchie

James Monaco

At the age of 36, Michael Ritchie has completed four features: *Downhill Racer* (1969), *The Candidate* (1972), *Prime Cut* (1972) and *Smile* (1975). They are quiet films, unpretentious and almost diffident in tone, and although each has developed its own coterie reputation, none of them has yet been subject to the kind of intense critical scrutiny which Ritchie's more visible and popular contemporaries have received. There is a seductive quality to these movies which is as elusive as it is attractive; and the harder one tries to capture that quality in words, the more evasive it becomes. In general, what sets them apart is a tone of cool irony—irony in both the general and specific senses of that word. A sardonic wit bubbles quietly through all Ritchie's films—a sense of humour subtly reminiscent of Richard Lester (whom Ritchie greatly admires) and at times of Preston Sturges. But his films are more restrained, more distant; they are not so immediately humorous. This is a direct result of the other irony which informs them: an aesthetic irony, a surprisingly sophisticated sense of the way various cinematic modes of discourse operate and the ways they can be combined to illuminate each other.

Ritchie has developed an ironic cinematic 'voice' which comments on its rhetoric at the same time that it employs it. The best referent we have for this sort of thing is the cinema of the New Wave, which also commented upon forms as it used them. But whereas Godard, Truffaut and their colleagues were mainly interested in the standard fictional modes of discourse, Michael Ritchie has concentrated on non-fictional modes (documentary, *cinéma-vérité*, TV news). Among younger American directors he is almost alone in this interest, Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool* being perhaps the only other recent American film of consequence which has tried to analyse our various film languages. So Ritchie's fresh intelligence is the more to be prized, as one of the few instruments we have for the liberation of American film from the fixation with Hollywood style that still controls it.

Ritchie is essentially a 'realist'. And the 'renaissance' of the last ten years (of which he is a part) has perhaps reinforced our sense that the styles and attitudes of Realism have played a more vital role in shaping American cinema than we usually care to admit. The popular histories may be redolent with praise for the anti-realist, expressionist American traditions of the Hollywood dream factories, but that's a distorted view of American film history. What else, if not the vague quality of realism, unites the otherwise disparate films of Altman and Cassavetes, Coppola and Mazursky, Ritchie and Scorsese? These six are, in my judgment, the 'Pantheon' of the American Renaissance. Contenders ('The Far Side of Paradise', to follow the Sarris model) include: Allen, Ashby, De Palma, Hellman, Lucas, McBride, Malick, May, Rafelson and Williams. On the basis of magnificent single films, Haskell Wexler and Bill Gunn should also be included.

These film-makers are still struggling, in various ways, with the old Hollywood style. At best, that style can be so thoroughly transformed that the result is almost something new (as in Coppola's *Godfather* films, especially Part II). At worst, it is a trap that can smother even an East Coast maverick like Marty Scorsese (as in his latter-Day Doris film, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*). Altman has struggled hard to parody these forms, but he hasn't yet escaped them. Cassavetes has ignored them most successfully. Mazursky seems to live with them comfortably. Michael Ritchie, perhaps, has dealt with them most intelligently.

I don't mean to suggest that Ritchie is mainly a film-maker's film-maker. That complex irony is important, but Ritchie also has an ability to draw blood from his characters. There is a strong pulse to his films which counterbalances their distant irony. It also seems clear—from the portrait of *Downhill Racer*, the metaphor of *Prime Cut*, the dialectics of *The Candidate* and the familiar, gently satirical essay of *Smile*—that Ritchie has a special vision of the American character and a rather sophisticated sense of how this country works. These are four dense, humorous and perspicacious commentaries on the way we live now.

Ritchie was born in Wisconsin and grew up in Berkeley, California, where his father taught psychology at the University. He studied history and literature at Harvard, where he first became interested in directing and gained some reputation with his production of Arthur Kopit's first play, *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...* Doors were opened: Ritchie was offered and accepted a job as assistant producer to Robert Saudek on the *Omnibus* television series in the early 1960s. Other series followed: first *Profiles in Courage*, then directorial assignments which included episodes of *The Man from UNCLE*, *Dr. Kildare*, *The Big Valley* and *Felony Squad*. He directed the pilot for *The Outsider* and over a dozen episodes of *Run For Your Life*. He also did a number of documentaries, working often with the Maysles brothers; and these, one suspects, were more important to his development as a film-maker than the bread-and-butter fiction series.

Ritchie made his first theatrical feature, *Downhill Racer*, in 1969. Paramount thought of it mainly as an exploitation product for ski buffs, and rushed production in order to get it into distribution for the skiing season. But audiences discovered that *Downhill Racer* had more going for it than snow and the sound of schusses, and the result is that the film has become something of a modern repertory classic. Costing $2 million to make, *Downhill Racer* soon earned its negative cost. Even though it was sold to television several years ago, it has already netted more than a million dollars in 'call-back' rentals, which is rather rare. But although no one has lost much money on a Ritchie film, no one has made a great deal either. So, like many film-makers, Ritchie measures his career in projects he's spent a lot of time on that never came to fruition. For every film he has completed, there have been a couple that died before shooting could begin.

After *Downhill Racer*, Ritchie spent much of 1970 working on an adaptation of William Bradford Huie's *Three Lives for Mississippi*, a book about the 1964 assassination of civil rights workers Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner. No producer was interested, so in 1971 Ritchie took on the assignment of directing Paddy Chayevsky's *The Hospital*, while he and Robert Redford were planning production of *The Candidate* to be shot later in the year. (Significantly, the film was to be an independent production.) Ritchie notes that he 'went through disagreement after disagreement' with Chayevsky about *The Hospital*, arguing about everything from casting (he wanted Tuesday Weld for the Diana Rigg role) to conception. A few weeks before shooting was to begin he was replaced by Arthur Hiller.

He took the assignment of *Prime Cut*, he says, 'on the rebound', and proceeded to shoot it during the late summer of 1971, racing the wheat harvest north through the Midwest to Saskatchewan. Cinema Center Films were already going out of business by this time, but they nevertheless took enough interest in this, one of their last projects, to 'seriously reshape' Ritchie's cut of the film. His version was for some strange reason allowed to play in Minneapolis, where it was apparently very popular. Elsewhere, the Cinema Center version did not do well. *The Candidate* was shot on location in Northern California (Ritchie lives in Mill Valley) during the winter of 1971–72. Ritchie and Redford had full control of the production; Warner Brothers picked it up only after it was completed.

Ritchie then spent a year on what he calls a 'contemporary ghost story', *The Stone Carnation*, which was to be made for Playboy Productions. It was cancelled before shooting could begin. Next, he turned to the development, with Stanley Elkin, of an ambitious original screenplay, *The Art of War*, following the career of the photographer Robert Capa from the Spanish Civil War to his death in Indo-China in 1954. The film would have cost at least $5 million. Columbia, who had financed development of the script, underwent a management change before shooting could begin. The project was cancelled.

In late 1973 and early 1974 Ritchie was working on a screenplay based on the book *Ten-Second Jailbreak* by *Ramparts* writers Bill Turner and Warren Hinckle, which recounts the true story of Joel Kaplan's escape from a Mexican prison several years ago, and which Ritchie saw as 'a kind of Watergate black comedy.' *Smile* intervened. (He had been working on this, quietly, for some time with writer Jerry Belson.) Ritchie managed to escape his *Jailbreak* contract, and *Smile* was shot during August and September 1974 on location in Santa Rosa, California, on a budget of just $1 million.

The scorecard now reads: six years, ten projects, four films completed (of which one, *Prime Cut*, bears not much resemblance to Ritchie's conception). We judge his career in features, then, on a third of the evidence we would like to have available.

DOWNHILL RACER

Ritchie's first feature bears some of the vestiges of his television career. It's a very 'tight' film, cool in tone; the images are closely cropped and the editing is sharp and efficient. The story, too, seems initially like a made-for-TV melodrama. *Downhill Racer* is a judicious portrait of a young American Olympic skier, David Chapellet, who knows how to get down an Alpine ski run quicker than most other people and is determined to make that talent pay. He is not dumb, nor is he really unfeeling, but he is the type of the professional athlete who knows little else besides his business, and who is passively inarticulate. The film covers three seasons of racing in Europe and two summer training interludes in the States, during one of which David pays a visit home to his father in Idaho Springs, Colorado. He doesn't spend much time with the old man, who is even more tight-lipped than David, and Chapellet soon jumps into the old Chevy to cruise down main street looking for the girl he left behind. They make love in the back of the Chevy. Afterwards, the girl tells Chapellet of her plans for the future (she has a chance to go to school in Denver to become a dental technician). His response is a blank look, a pause, and 'Say, you got any more of that gum?'

As Chapellet's star rises on the tour, he has several run-ins with his coach (Gene Hackman), who is the very model of the consummate professional 'amateur' athlete. He also has a mild affair with Carole (Camilla Sparv), a mod, affectless woman with a bright and empty smile who works for a ski manufacturer who wants Chapellet's endorsement. The romance, like everything else on the 'amateur' circuit, turns out to be just another commercial enterprise, and ends as pointlessly as it began. At the end of the film, Chapellet has his Olympic gold medal, having brilliantly but half-consciously tricked his main rival into over-extending himself. But Chapellet's moment of glory is short-lived, as media attention quickly shifts to a rising new star who has almost beaten him. (The film was written by James Salter and photographed by Brian Probyn.)

But to tell the fairly simple melodramatic story of *Downhill Racer* is to miss the point. The film is successful first as an extraordinary evocation of the rhythms and

'Downhill Racer': Chapellet (Robert Redford) and media men

moods and feel of competitive skiing. It is not only the excellent action footage (shot by two French skiers who had never held cameras before) that is important in this respect; but also Ritchie's success in capturing the Alpine light and the exact atmosphere of après-ski and high-powered competition. This is a film of felt truths, a tightly arranged collage of images and sounds, each of which contributes to our immediate experience of the locales and the people. Ritchie has a great eye for detail, whether it's the precisely *au courant* (at that particular time) white knee stockings worn by Carole, or the way the men on the team banter with each other to pass the time, or the young skier's 'Antartex' sheepskin coat, or the band that plays 'Moon River' with just the right hip arrangement in the Alpine tavern. Like the movies which will follow it, *Downhill Racer* is a film of material density; and the frame is crammed with detail.

But the film is an acted fiction, not straight *cinéma-vérité*, and this is the key to its special irony. First, Ritchie de-dramatises the action; his characters are only semi-articulate in the first place, and he drains out whatever verbal melodrama may be left by editing the film so tightly that (as in 'real' life) any drama is mostly read between the lines (or, more precisely, between the shots). This is a drama of looks and gestures rather than words, and to place it in context Ritchie uses a judicious mixture of professional and non-professional actors to achieve the necessary fine balance between what Godard would call 'found' cinema and 'built' cinema. The fiction takes on much of the verisimilitude of the *cinéma-vérité* background, while that background shares with the fiction the heightened response we usually have to condensed, *artistic* reality.*

Central to this process, of course, is the actor's art—the forum where fiction and non-fiction meet and infuse each other. *Downhill Racer* made Gene Hackman something of a star (and remember that his role has almost nothing going for it; he's certainly the direct opposite of the Pat O'Brien kind of coach) and solidified Robert Redford's then uncertain reputation. As I noted earlier, very little of their success has anything to do with dialogue: it is a more purely cinematic kind of acting, a matter of gesture and reaction. Emblematic of this aspect of the film is one short scene in which Chapellet visits his rival, Creech, in hospital. Creech has just broken his leg, days before the Olympics. Four years down the drain for Creech. A free run for Chapellet. Chapellet approaches the bed and Redford 'does a look', in actor's parlance. It's a half-grimace, half-smile, really impossible to describe in words, but in about three-quarters of a second Redford has spoken books about the character of David Chapellet—that he is sorry, or rather knows that he *should* be sorry, that he has a certain fellow-feeling for Creech in spite of his own ambition, that he's the kind of guy who just can't deal with these situations, that he feels a bit guilty (but not much), and that he has come to the decision simply to ignore the situation. There are many such dense moments in each of Ritchie's films. (For another example in *Downhill Racer*, check the scene in the car when Carole gives David his Christmas present, all the while chattering inanely about her own Christmas celebration with her family.)

'The Candidate': the amateur (Robert Redford) at campaign headquarters

These two sorts of truths—*cinéma-vérité* and fiction: the material and the emblematic modes—combine to give us a third kind of truth which we might call 'structural'. What fascinates Ritchie are the networks of relationships that exist among the people of his films, the way they are formed by the context of their experience, and the way the characters work them out, in gesture and word. In this respect, all his films summarise their various subjects. Simply put, there is perhaps no better film about athletes than *Downhill Racer*; at least no film I've seen which comes within challenging distance of capturing the styles and attitudes of people who play games—exacting, artful games—for a living.

But there is another level to *Downhill Racer*. Possibly the film's most significant aspect is its analysis of the media which transmit most of the information we get about people and activities like these. If *Downhill Racer* looks like a television film, it is not only because Michael Ritchie worked in TV for eight years; it is also because Alpine skiing is in a sense a creature of the small screen. The mode fits the subject, but at the same time Ritchie shows us how TV and press journalism distorts both the people and the events. If there is a classic antagonist in the film, it must be the media; and Chapellet recognises this. He has an instinctive distaste for journalists; he can't put it into words, but he seems to understand that their function is to take a complex, real character and reduce it to comic strip dimensions. Chapellet is a crotchety, not very likeable, selfish loner, but the journalists seem to have very little trouble turning him into a modest, shy, all-American hero fit for public consumption. The contrast between the 'real' and the media images is one of the main motive forces of the film. (There is also a more technical critique of TV sports which is too complicated to discuss here, but which bears mentioning.)

THE CANDIDATE

Ritchie's second film† is in every respect larger and more ambitious than his first, but the basic patterns are similar: the concrete orientation towards fact, the tension between *cinéma-vérité* and acted fiction, the structural intelligence, the fascination with precise atmospheres, similar relationships between the characters (Redford is again a performer, this time a politician; he has a 'coach'—in fact, two of them—and he has just as much trouble with the media), and even parallel sexual politics. But *The*

* We don't really have much of a vocabulary for discussing the differing responses to various modes of cinematic discourse. It may prove useful to compare the fiction/non-fiction tension Ritchie sets up with similar balances operating in films by Cassavetes and Ken Loach (whom Ritchie also greatly admires). They also forge a union of 'fiction' and 'documentary'.

†Although *The Candidate* was shot after *Prime Cut*, it was conceived and written before it.

The Candidate': the professionals. Allan Garfield and Peter Boyle in foreground

Candidate was intended as a political instrument, and it therefore speaks to us directly as the previous film did not. It has a dialectic that *Downhill Racer* didn't have, and which demands our attention.

The Candidate examines David McKay's campaign for the U.S. Senate seat from California. McKay (Redford) is a young, good-looking, shaggy-haired lawyer and vaguely radical activist, the son of an ex-Governor (Melvyn Douglas), who almost unintentionally defeats the incumbent Senator, Crocker Jarmon (Don Porter), the epitome of smooth California conservatism. McKay is initially talked into running by Lucas (Peter Boyle), a professional political manager. ('What's in it for you?' he asks Lucas. 'Oh, a phone card, an air card, a thousand a week.') McKay instinctively distrusts electoral politics, but Lucas makes a good case for the campaign: 'You're happy? O.K., clams are happy. You saved some trees, you got a clinic opened. Does that make you feel good? Meanwhile, Jarmon sits on his committees and carves up the land, the oil, the taxes . . .' It's a persuasive argument, and Lucas seals the agreement by telling McKay that he's bound to lose. Therefore, he'll be free from practical political concerns and will have nine months simply to use the power of the candidate's position to talk to the people of California and raise some issues.

But McKay is very quickly taken over by Lucas and his advertising expert, Klein (Allan Garfield), to such effect that by election day he is not much more than a consumer product, a new soap powder which has been marketed with exceptional skill. The simple lesson of the film is, then, that the electoral system co-opts even the most careful candidate—that there is no real way the media power which the position confers can be used for important tasks like raising issues, since the media consume and transform candidates just as they do athletes. McKay has nevertheless revealed himself during the course of the film as having some real, tangible understanding of the issues involved. At the end, having won, he is left almost cowering in a brilliantly white, sterile hotel room, plaintively asking his mentor and manager, 'What do we do now?' (The film was written by Jeremy Larner, and photographed in Panavision by Victor J. Kemper and John Korty.)

Like its predecessor, *The Candidate* is intent upon capturing the style and mode of professional activity, and does so very well; but this time Ritchie is more interested in the implications of the mode. The media are here more obviously a subject of the film, and more crucial also to its design. *The Candidate* is rich, for example, in cutting parodies of campaign commercials —political advertisements which run so true to form that they could be used with only minor alterations should Redford himself ever decide to run for the Senate. Watching *The Candidate* is, much of the time, like watching a real campaign. The tone is that of televised politics and news, and the effect is not only that it fits the film's subject but that it redoubles the irony.

Nearly all the characters are to some extent *à clef*: Allan Garfield's Klein is a clear caricature (even physically) of David Garth, the king-maker of the late 1960s who managed the media campaigns for Lindsay, Tunney and Kennedy. Boyle's Lucas has touches of Richard Goodwin and Richard Aurelio (Lindsay's former manager), and McKay himself is a mosaic composition of John Tunney (Senator from California and son of the boxer), John Lindsay (handsome former mayor of New York; now to be seen acting in Preminger's *Rosebud*) and Jerry Brown, the ascetic, scholarly son of former long-time California governor Pat Brown. (Jerry Brown didn't actually run for office until this year, when he was handily elected Governor, so the film-makers may have been indulging in a little prognostication.) Even some minor characters are recognisable—one of McKay's aides, for instance, is a dead ringer for Jeff Greenfield, who was a speechwriter for both Bobby Kennedy and Lindsay.

Ritchie was able to capture this unusual degree of verisimilitude because his crew could as easily have been assembled for a political campaign as for a film. Jeremy Larner had been Gene McCarthy's speechwriter in 1968; Ritchie himself had done television work for Tunney; the associate producer Nelson Rising had been Tunney's campaign manager. (And let us not forget that Melvyn Douglas' wife, Helen Gahagan Douglas, once ran for a Senate seat from California. She was beaten by a red-baiting, swarthy, lean and hungry young Congressman who later went on to higher office.)

As simple portraiture, *The Candidate* works as well as or better than *Downhill Racer*: it's just as materially rich, as muted in tone, full of details caught with subtlety and grace. Once again, the work of actors is a main basis for the film's style. Redford, the painter turned actor, works marvellously with Ritchie: his characters are always quiet, almost frightened, but he can capture an identity at once archetypal yet thoroughly individualised with a look, a gesture, a tone of voice. Watch McKay with his father, or reacting to his opponent's slick professionalism, or trying to communicate with his wife (he's only a little better at this than Chapellet), or learning how to speak in public, or trying to fathom his manager. It's all spare but accurate. And half a dozen other actors in the film rival Redford in their concision.

But *The Candidate* was not only intended as an ironic, endistanced portrait. Ritchie and Larner and Redford wanted the film to play an active political role in 1972. They hoped it would be seen and heeded by people who were voting in primaries when it was released and by delegates to that summer's national convention. Because the film has conscious political aims, it must be judged very carefully on this score; and there are some real problems with the political dialectics of *The Candidate*. It seems to suffer from some of the same muddle-headedness that it attributes to its protagonist.

Basic to the film's political and moral structure is the tension between street politics and electoral politics. When Lucas finds him, McKay is operating a storefront. Meanwhile, Jarmon is carving up the land, the oil, the taxes. No doubt, then, McKay's decision to become involved in electoral politics is logical, but the artificial dilemma seems spurious and seriously skews our perspective on the film. If we take McKay solely as a media product, the film works well: it is a finely ironic (and useful) portrait of the American electoral show which drains so much political energy into its essentially false process. But when we take McKay seriously, as we are likely to do when we hear him talk passionately about our own political realities, the movie's focus of force changes. The problem is that the character, held at an ironic distance by Larner and Ritchie, really serves two functions in the film: as spokesman for street politics and as ridiculous victim of electoral politics. Simply put, he should have been smarter. There should be a more forceful analysis of the situation: if street politics is ineffectual (as it is, in part), then how can it seize power? If electoral politics is a liberal media show, then how can we operate within it to accomplish real work? And, finally, what about the third option: confronting the lethal political establishment directly and by force? These

admittedly very difficult questions are not dealt with squarely; we are left with a vaguely aesthetic and apolitical distaste for *all* politics, and the film must be condemned for that.

This dialectical 'feedback' may work in favour of *The Candidate* as a realistic depiction of a real situation, but it kills it as a political instrument. The film simply avoids the job of describing the true relationship between electoral politics and street politics, and in 1972 that was the most important dilemma we faced on the left. Ritchie's complex irony distances all his films; usually that tone amplifies the subject, but with *The Candidate* the distance is damaging and a more explicit commitment needs to be made. Nor is it enough to excuse the film by explaining that it works in a Brechtian way, to ask questions rather than to answer them. Brecht always implied answers. 'What do we do now?' We didn't answer that question at all satisfactorily in 1972. And we still haven't.

PRIME CUT

Nick Devlin (Lee Marvin), a natty Irish gangster from Chicago, is sent to Kansas City, in the heart of the American breadbasket, to corral the newly independent and uppity Mary Ann (Gene Hackman), a meat packer-gangster, and his hulking brother Weanie, who are doing a healthy business in drugs and girls. ('I give 'em what they want,' says Mary Ann, 'things to stick in their arm and things to rub their belly with.') Devlin rescues one of the girls (Cissy Spacek) from Mary Ann's orderly, scientifically run flesh pens. (At least in the producers' version; in Ritchie's original cut he simply took her, with considerable embarrassment, as collateral.) Finally, Nick has a classic shoot-out with Mary Ann and Weanie, bloodying Mary Ann's groin and cruelly refusing to finish him off. (In the producers' version he also rescues the little girls from the orphanage where they are being trained.) The film is rife with such ironic macho references and homosexual posturings, and it has a superbly sardonic tone which derives mainly from the fresh-faced, rugged Big Sky Mid-Western context in which the story is set. (The film was written by Robert Dillon and photographed in Panavision by Gene Polito.)

Prime Cut is not prime Ritchie. In addition to the changes already indicated, Cinema Center, according to Ritchie, also 'injected the love story and the happy ending.' In the original version 'the tone of cold irony was more pervasive and the black comedy much stronger.' Ritchie's cut ended with a kind of samurai confrontation between Gene Hackman and Lee Marvin. Marvin killed a great many more people, then stepped out into the vast field of sunflowers in bloom which surrounds the barn as the 4-H band played and the credits rolled.

But enough of Ritchie's original conception remains for us to see what he wanted to do with the film. Again, the hallmarks of his style are clarity, irony and character, now set within the limits of a genre.* There is no longer a balance between *cinéma-vérité* and acted fiction; instead there is a new dialectic between the traditions of the genre and Ritchie's parody of it. He can explore more fully the metaphoric potential of the film, something he couldn't do with the verisimilitude of *The Candidate* and *Downhill Racer*. In the world of *Prime Cut*, beef and women are equally valuable commodities, and both products are raised scientifically on special feed and drugs. The businessmen who deal in these commodities are broad parodies of the macho gangsters from the far reaches of our film mythology; and if Ritchie's version had been preserved, we might have seen more clearly that the film intends to use mythic metaphors of traditional genres to explore and illuminate the subject of capitalist 'commoditisation'. If the love story weren't there, we'd also have a clearer and more biting satire of contemporary sexism (which in the substructure of the film is at least potentially connected directly with capitalist exploitation).

That's what *Prime Cut* might have been. As it is, we still have some powerful isolated scenes, chief among which is Ritchie's homage to *North by Northwest* (a film, surprisingly, with many of the same themes). After an encounter with Mary Ann and his lean, blue-eyed all-American henchmen at a county fair, Marvin and Spacek are pursued past a gallery of smiling faces into a quiet, open wheat field ready for harvest. It seems they've lost their pursuers hiding in the elephant-eye-high wheat, but as in Hitchcock's poem to the paranoia of the wide open spaces, there is no escape even on the great plains. A fat-faced, demoniacally grinning farm boy driving a giant reaper-baler begins to bear down on them. He cuts wide swathes through the waving wheat, but Marvin's men arrive just in time in their big-city Cadillac and save the harried couple by ramming the huge car smack into the mouth of the reaper-baler. The city is devoured by the country as the Cadillac is dutifully chewed up by the machine, neatly baled, and dropped out at the back in clanking turds. A fine homage to Hitchcock and a brilliant metaphor in itself, as one machine devours another under the clean, clear skies amidst the abundant fields of the heartland. It's an emblem of the American collective id that matches Hitchcock's own.

If *Prime Cut* is opposed in style to Ritchie's previous films, it is nevertheless closely parallel in theme. Like Nick Devlin and Mary Ann, Ritchie's characters always seem to have a glassy-eyed, demoniac obsession with either their professions or their life-styles. And that is the source of much of his humour, here and elsewhere.

* To judge how much Ritchie did accomplish, compare *Prime Cut*, even in its present version, with the muddle John Frankenheimer made of a similar script by Robert Dillon, *99 and 44/100% Dead*.

'Prime Cut': Gene Hackman, Lee Marvin

SMILE

Ritchie's most recent film is simpler and subtler than *The Candidate* or *Prime Cut*, and its narrative style falls somewhere between the two poles those movies represented. It is more fictional than the earlier films, but less metaphorical than *Prime Cut*, since it isn't really a genre film despite its fiction. Ritchie has used the phenomenon of the beauty contest as an organising principle for a relaxed but telling study of small-town America. He mentions Milos Forman's *Fireman's Ball* as an antecedent, and indeed the two films share much in terms of attitude and structure. But there are reference points closer to home: Sinclair Lewis' *Babbitt* (about Zenith, 'the city with zip, zest and zowie') is the literary classic of the genre, while Preston Sturges' comedies, though sharper and more mordant, seem to be direct cinematic ancestors.

'Big Bob' Freelander (Bruce Dern) sells cars for a living, but his heart lies with the annual 'Young American Miss' Beauty Pageant of which he is the director. His aide-de-camp is Brenda Di Carlo (Barbara Feldon), a woman of about forty, meticulous, efficient and professionally bright-eyed. Brenda's suburban split-level does not have plastic-covered furniture (which is

'Smile': contestant (Joan Prather) and coach

too raw a cliché), but the film's most dramatic scene has to be played out on kraft-paper runners in her living room since she's just had the carpets shampooed. Brenda's husband Andy (Nicholas Pavor) makes little brass and plastic trophies for a living—the kind that clutter the mantelpieces of amateur bowlers and Little League managers throughout the country. Andy has begun to drink heavily. Unlike absolutely everyone else in the town, he hates his smug suburban existence and wants out. He is also fast approaching his 35th birthday, which means he'll have to go through the 'Exhausted Rooster Ceremony' at the Bears' Club—a kind of admission of impotence and humility before the gods of youth. None of the other people in the film has any real idea of what Andy's going through; Brenda is alienated by what she calls his 'sarcasm and self-pity'.

But Andy is in no sense the focus of *Smile*—that would be too easy, and a bit forced. We spend most of our time with the thirty-three teenage contestants in the pageant, and although several of them are exceptionally funny, Ritchie never exploits them. The quality which sets *Smile* apart from other, more simplistic satires of suburban America is that Michael Ritchie understands these people and enjoys them. Milos Forman is well cited.

We follow the contest through several days of rehearsal and two nights of pageantry. Along the way there are several shaggy dog episodes. 'Little Bob' Freelander is caught trying to photograph the girls in their dressing-room—he already has orders from his classmates in Junior High for a dozen polaroid nudes. He is sentenced to see a psychiatrist. Andy goes through his initiation ceremony into middle age and then perfunctorily takes a pot-shot at his wife; but he only wings Brenda and she shows up for the last night of the pageant with her arm in an impeccably tailored sling. The girls rehearse their hearts out, sing their songs, play their skits and take revenge on a particularly ambitious contestant. The winners are chosen, and as we leave beautiful Santa Rosa, the city is getting back to normal. Big Bob is back in his car lot, Brenda's on the mend, the winners of the pageant are learning how to endorse products, and Andy? . . . Andy is lost in the backwash, an anomaly in small-town U.S.A. where everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. (The film was written by Jerry Belson and photographed by Conrad Hall.)

While the media are not a main factor in the aesthetic equation of *Smile*, its structure nevertheless draws heavily on the techniques Ritchie had developed in his first two films. As he had previously staged downhill races and a political campaign, for *Smile* he set about constructing what was in essence an actual beauty pageant. Although *Smile* had its own choreographer (Jim Bates), Ritchie thought to hire Michael Kidd to play Tommy French, the pro from Los Angeles who stages the pageant. Most of the girls in the contest were non-professionals or had previously had only minimal experience—several are daughters of people in the industry, including Maria O'Brien (Edmund O'Brien's daughter) and Melanie Griffith (Tippi Hedren's daughter). The result was that during the seven-week shooting period, relationships developed among the girls (and between the girls and the adults) which were close to those which might be expected during a 'real' pageant; and the mixture of professionals and non-professionals once again gives Ritchie's film an unusually energetic truth. Even the community became involved: the final pageant was staged in the Veterans' Memorial Auditorium of Santa Rosa, and Santa Rosans turned out en masse (and paid $2.50 for the privilege) to watch it. Why not simply film an actual pageant? The fact that the 'Young American Miss' contest was specially staged paradoxically allowed Ritchie to capture details which would have escaped a *cinéma-vérité* camera. Free to hide behind fictional characters, the girls appear more natural on screen. What is missing from *Smile* that we would expect in straight *cinéma-vérité* is the tension between the intrusive camera and its subjects.

Of course the film also depends for its success on a written script and the control which that implies. Although the satire is subtly understated, there are direct jokes. Big Bob and his wife are planning 'a romantic vacation at Disneyland' after the excitement of the pageant is over. One of the judges solicitously asks a contestant, 'Why do you like to play the flute, dear . . . in your own words?' But this is found humour, rather than forced. Jerry Belson (who has written the script for *The Grasshopper* as well as dozens of situation comedies) on Ritchie's instructions simply spent a few weeks hanging about at beauty pageants. 'The script wrote itself,' he says.

The control of the written script is also evident in the design of the metaphor of the film. As in *Prime Cut* (although not so viciously), Ritchie has found a resonant emblem for one facet of the American character. He reinforces the film's dimension of commentary by punctuating it with carefully chosen popular songs from the last fifteen years: Nat King Cole's 'Smile', The Beach Boys' 'California Girls', Paul Simon's 'Kodachrome', Ringo Starr's 'You're Sixteen'. This is not of course by any means an original device, but it's worth noting that it is almost essential for a film like this. Like *American Graffiti*, which was shot in the same general area, *Smile* is an essay about just that set of national myths which popular music has purveyed with such insidious precision during the last two decades. The sentiments of those songs are the real foundation of the film.

The American Dream of the Young American Misses and their mentors may long ago have turned yellow around the edges in urban America, but it still survives in small towns from coast to coast. The main effect of *Smile* is to re-emphasise the sublime pointlessness of that thoroughly anachronistic myth, while at the same time treating its victims with real empathy. It's not their fault, after all. Miss Antelope Valley (Joan Prather), who is the primary focus of interest among the contestants, is just slightly more sceptical than the other girls. At one point she turns to her room-mate and suggests that perhaps beauty pageants are a little demeaning. Miss San Diego replies: 'Boys get money for making touchdowns, why shouldn't girls get money for being cute?' There is a pause as she works this out in her sloe-eyed way, then: 'Yeah, but maybe boys shouldn't get money for playing *football*.' The light dawns slowly but inevitably; and *Smile* has the patience to wait for it. ■

Michael Ritchie with 'Smile' contestants

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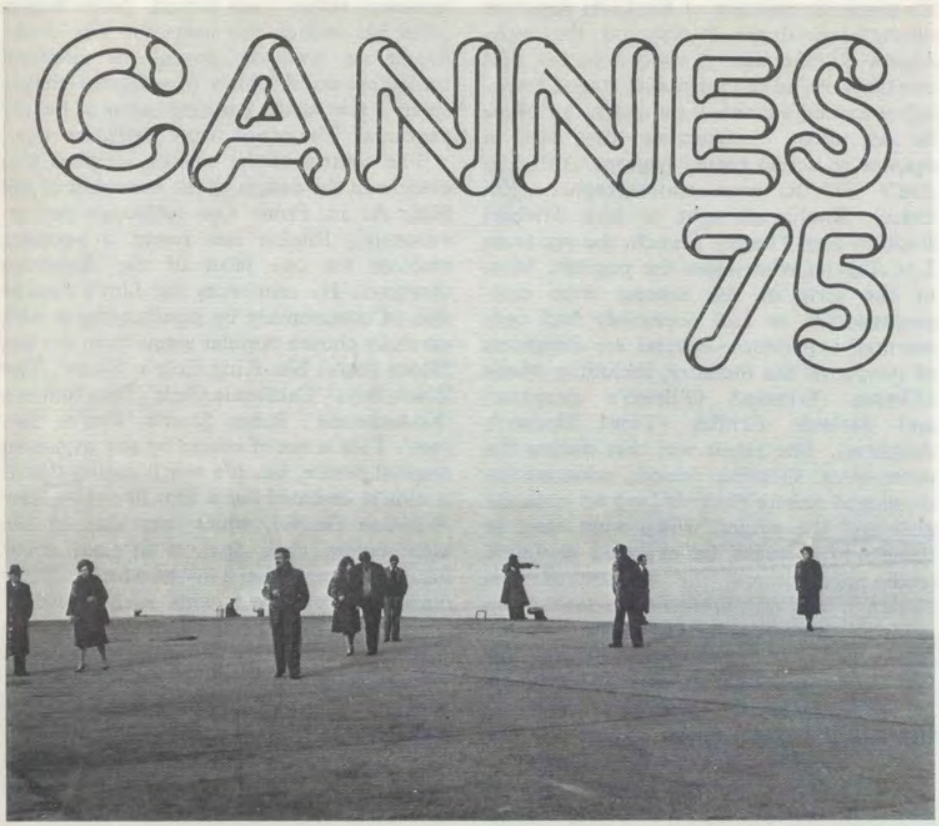

Theodor Angelopoulos' 'O Thiassos'; Delphine Seyrig, Claude Mann and Didier Flamand in Marguerite Duras' 'India Song'

It was like old times at Cannes. Godard descended, to mumble in that unmistakable, barely audible monotone through a press conference about his plans for *Breathless*, Mark Two; a bomb knocked a small, quickly repaired dent in the Palais; a light aircraft incessantly circled the bay, trailing a banner with the brave device 'Salkind, Superman, Puzo'; Jeanne Moreau, madam president of the Jury, could be seen marching briskly about the Carlton, looking as though she might be thinking of banging a few heads together; and they booed Antonioni at the end of *The Passenger*. It was a mild, perfunctory kind of booing, like some ritual remembrance of the *L'Avventura* hullabaloo of fifteen years ago, and it could in a perverse way be seen as rather cheering. Intent on renewing himself (although I am not among those who think that *Zabriskie Point* demands some act of contrition), Antonioni has never fallen into the respectability of old masterdom. His films are worth cheering (or booing) because they can still discompose.

The Passenger demands the cheers, and as Richard Roud says, in discussing the film at length elsewhere in this issue, it re-establishes Antonioni in Europe and as the master of landscape. The landscape, of course, of our time: this story of an attempt to change an identity is as indefinably but unmistakably a film for the 1970s as *Blow-Up* was almost too definably a film for the 1960s. Its key settings—the desert and Spain—are classically fatalistic: empty spaces waiting for death. But the film is also about the indifferent, continuing process of life. Richard Roud rightly concentrates on the seven-minute shot which is the movie's climax; but this great parabola of camera movement is followed by a final moment of grace—lights switched on, an old man and a dog walking home, the woman of the hotel coming out to sit on her doorstep. In answer to some extremely tedious and literal questions at his press conference, Antonioni said that if he could spell it out in words he wouldn't be making pictures; and the end of *The Passenger*—like the last sequence of *The Eclipse*—is full of wordless intimations. One's reservations are about a certain flabbiness in the basic script structure, some sense of radical chic assumptions inadequately questioned. But on this occasionally rickety scaffolding, the great architect of cinema has built something remarkable.

If Antonioni is stimulated by landscape—and *The Passenger* is, in every sense, an astonishingly mobile film—Jancsó's unchanging Hungarian plain is an open stage in which part of the object is to situate rituals in space. In his **Elektra**, the immutable elements are reassembled: horsemen, girls, jigging peasants, men cracking whips, men trailing smoking torches. Against their shifting patterns, now as familiar as a ballet, Jancsó makes the Greek tragedy both timeless and urgent. The film is swift, concise and dazzling; I didn't count the shots (though there seemed to be rather more than the eight that have been spoken of), but the remarkable thing about Jancsó's almost seamless cinema is both its dramatic concentration (Mari Töröcsik is a splendidly brooding Elektra) and its buoyancy. The end of the film brings on a scarlet helicopter, a red bird of hope; and there is no sense of incongruity, merely a kind of willed rightness, about this blend of the timeless story, Jancsó country and toytown technology.

Without too much difficulty, a line could be traced from Antonioni through Jancsó in the work of Theodor Angelopoulos, fast emerging as the Greek director to watch. **O Thiassos** (English title: *The Journey of the Cast*) is an altogether more ambitious enterprise than his *Days of 36*, running almost four hours and opening with a gradualness which suggests that the film has indeed a long way to go. The journey, in the company of a small group of strolling players traversing their country and its history from 1939 to 1952, is a compelling marathon. Everywhere they go, the troupe try to complete their strange little play, *Golfo the Shepherdess*, setting up its endearing backcloth, on which rather weedy sheep graze by a stream, in run-down theatres or by the seashore (to demonstrate their profession to the British army, who react by closing ranks and singing 'Tipperary'). Everywhere, history breaks in, painfully and insistently. Angelopoulos has hit on an infallibly effective format, and his ramshackle company is both a device and a focus. But even at its most flamboyant—and there are set-pieces in which the horsemen ride like Jancsó's—the film works through apprehension and darkness, the sense of a country stunned by historical process.

Long films, edging around the three hour mark, seemed rather in style. The Algerians came up with the not entirely unexpected prize-winner **Chronique des Années de**

Braise, recounting their history from 1939 to 1954: a plodding epic, in its way, but directed by Lakhdar-Hamina with fervour, an evident sense of occasion, and the ability to manœuvre crowd scenes on a scale forgotten by more parsimonious cinemas. And, also at great length, there was the American **Milestones,** a study of the post-Vietnam mood in the alternative society, directed by Robert Kramer (of *Ice*) and John Douglas. Most of the American expatriates seemed to find the film very impressive; for others, its goodwill, earnest solemnity and talkativeness (the style suggests 'real' chat, but the characters are in fact playing parts, and sound like it) had a cinema-emptying effect. Radical America in search of the eternal verities seems to be finding sententiousness along the way.

Jack Gold's **Man Friday,** with Peter O'Toole as a crotchety Crusoe and Richard Roundtree as an over-sophisticated Friday, who has clearly arrived on the island by way of *Shaft*, stacks the cards for the noble savage; and the idea of presenting the story as it appears to Friday is one of those ingenious conceptions which perhaps need the Shavian sense of paradox if they're really to work. Adrian Mitchell's script comes up with some jokes (like Crusoe's horror at a pantheism which can find God in a banana), but the film is really set up to present O'Toole as a cranky compendium of nineteenth century attitudes—property, propriety and sportsmanship—against a thoroughly modern Friday, whose tribe looks all set to audition for a commune musical. The island stockade isn't that timeless, and Jack Gold lets the film straggle erratically, incorporating among other things an expendable sequence in which the couple fail to invent the flying machine.

Werner Herzog's **Every Man for Himself** is also, though a thousand miles away, about the confrontation of the primitive and the experienced, the innocent without a past or a future and the settled, continuing life of regulations, hypocrisies and unquestioned habits. Kaspar Hauser appeared in 1828 in the streets of Nuremberg, after a childhood spent shackled in a dark cellar. Stories grew about him: he was Napoleon's —or somebody's—son. He was given shelter, taught to speak, shown off as a freak or a pet; and some years later he was bafflingly murdered. Truffaut's *L'Enfant Sauvage* concentrates on the process of learning, contrasted with the child's animal instincts for lost freedoms. Herzog shows Kaspar's existence as a kind of trance, bounded at either end by darkness: he is not a child to be instructed, but a being from somewhere else, disquieting and unassimilable. Bruno S, who plays the part out of his own history of a troubled life in institutions, is extraordinary in his efforts to understand and make himself understood. Kaspar has no independent volition (at the outset, he's dressed like a dummy by his jailer, and simply stands for hours like a scarecrow in the street), but he has an independent presence. After his death, the autopsy discovers physical abnormalities, and the town, as it were, can return to its own sleep. Herzog directs with a total, self-willed concentration, and a feeling for physical reality which derives partly from the setting—a lush, tamed countryside, an overgrown garden, solid wooden furniture. As with his *Aguirre*, the film seems designed to expand in the mind.

One of the attractions of Cannes—and everyone seemed agreed that this year the shop was exceptionally well stocked—is the sheer range of goods on display. I missed, for instance, **Sunday Too Far Away,** a film about Australian sheep-shearers directed by Ken Hannam, a veteran of *Dr. Finlay's Casebook* and *Spy Trap.* Everyone who saw it reported more than favourably. I also missed, without regrets, the Brazilian **Guerra Conjugal,** which yielded the festival's most bizarre English synopsis: 'Domestic servitude, ghastly kisses . . . kitchen-sink eroticism, senile concupiscence, slaps in the face, terrible decoration of apartments, doubt about sex, asthma . . . Alle (*sic*) these finally lead to the possibility of redemption through an excess of sin.'

Both these films were in the wide-ranging Directors' Fortnight, as was the Tehran prize-winner **Prince Ehtejab,** one of several Iranian films on show. Its director, Bahman Farmanara, has done a stint as a critic (as has Theodor Angelopoulos), which may or may not have anything to do with his picture's allusive, complex structure and shifting time scales. The theme is the power and decline of an extravagant, ferocious feudal caste, as recalled by a sick man in whose mind past and present episodes of cruelty, decadence and decay move darkly to and fro. The Iranians, it is said, are prepared to help finance Orson Welles' uncompleted films; and there are some darkling Wellesian echoes in this sophisticated but uneven work. Hardly surprisingly, Farmanara apparently had considerable difficulty in setting up his film; but if Iran is prepared to allow its directors freedom as well as opportunity, the new film power looks to be well on its way.

The international cross-referencing of the cinema can seem very far-flung. Shuji Terayama's **Pastoral Hide and Seek**, for instance, runs to a subtitled quotation from Borges, suggestions of more than a nodding acquaintance with Fellini, and a fascination with symbolic clocks (shared, incidentally, with *Prince Ehtejab*). A Japanese youth is tied to life with mother, encounters a circus and an inflatable balloon-woman, communes with a medium and enjoys other surrealist experiences. Halfway through, his grown-up self (in the person of the film-maker) appears, to contemplate the relevance of memory and the need to come to terms with it. The film ends with a splendid *coup de cinéma*: the hero and his mother are sitting quietly at tea, a wall collapses and they are found to be on a Tokyo street corner, as though posed in a shop window. This apart, however, the surrealist cavortings too often seem merely bizarre.

Back to politics with a Critics' Week film from Switzerland, Rolf Lyssy's **Konfrontation,** which has the advantage of covering new ground, or at least a historical episode likely to be unfamiliar to most people. In 1936 David Frankfurter, a medical student and a Yugoslavian Jew, assassinated Wilhelm Gustloff, a leading Nazi based on Davos. Scrupulously, the film explores the background, the killing and the trial, before finally turning away from the past and the actor to interview the real David Frankfurter, now settled in Israel. Lyssy's film is dispassionate and methodical, perhaps feeling the need to get almost too much material on record, but in its feeling for historical process, combining its own sense of the past with news footage which for once doesn't look as though it belonged to an entirely different epoch, it again shows that the German-Swiss are not letting Geneva make all the running. More up to date, Michel Brault's **Les Ordres** tells what happened in Canada after the Quebec kidnappings and killings of a few years ago, when several hundred people were rounded up and held for a time in prison. Actors play the detainees on whom the film chooses to concentrate, and

Bahman Farmanara's 'Prince Ehtejab'

Orson Welles in 'F. for Fake'

there's an effective, low-key suggestion of panic, bewilderment and sheer fatigue among people held incommunicado. What the film never investigates, however, are the more difficult questions of society's defences against terrorist tactics. *Les Ordres* simply hits, perhaps rather below the belt, at the liberal conscience.

As usual, Cannes provided opportunities to catch up, and the two latest Chabrol films appeared in the Marché on successive days. **Une Partie de Plaisir,** a bitter, laconic but depth-charged film about a man, his little daughter and his two women, contrasts gracious living with ungracious emotions. I preferred **Les Innocents aux Mains Sales,** although it's the slighter work—one of those corkscrew murder plots, after the Boileau and Narcejac style, in which characters who had seemed to be safely dead keep vindictively reappearing. Romy Schneider and Rod Steiger play it to the hilt, and there are two vintage Chabrol policemen who keep discussing the case over greedy meals. By definition, this sort of trick plot can go only so far; but it's executed with a mesmerising awareness of when to heighten or slacken pace, and just what degree of character weight the fiction will stand. Miss Schneider, cast here in the steely mould of Stéphane Audran, has a splendid final scene with her lawyer, poised on a Chabrolian knife-edge between personal feeling and professional decorum.

But for me the most sheerly pleasurable movie at Cannes was Orson Welles' **F. for Fake,** as it now seems to be called after toying with *Fake, Question Mark* and other titles. John Russell Taylor wrote about it some time ago in SIGHT AND SOUND; and the fact that it's only now properly emerging seems the result of contractual problems. One hopes that some alert English distributor will snap up these seventy-odd scintillating moments of wit, movie legerdemain, ingenuity, anecdote and Wellesian observation. This, of course, is the film in which Welles builds on François Reichenbach's footage about the art master faker Elmyr de Hory, moving from Clifford Irving's book on de Hory into the Irving-Howard Hughes affair, with side reflections on *The War of the Worlds* and other topics. Earlier accounts, however, had not fully suggested how much the film is also about Welles—musing on the role of art experts (read critics), enjoying the confounding of these solemn fellows, considering the artist as charlatan and the charlatan as artist. He moves absolutely easily from the devastating cocksure charm of de Hory (who thinks he can sketch a better Matisse than Matisse ever managed) to the great anonymous presence of Chartres. What is 'art' without its attributions? Who is Welles, under the conjuror's cloak and the black hat? Dazzling, invigorating fun, the film also has relevance to Welles' wider concerns. It leaves one wondering under what signature he may finally release the long delayed *Deep Waters*, and hoping that if it takes Iranian assistance to do it, the other Welles films will see the light. There is, simply, no one to touch him.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

The most successful innovation at Cannes since 1969 and the Directors' Fortnight was the sub-section in the Palais called, unfortunately, 'Les Yeux Fertiles'. This was the title of an early book of poems about painters by Eluard, but it sounds just as silly in French as 'The Fertile Eyes' does in English. Never mind: the idea of the section was to show films which bear some relation to the other arts. There were two ballet films, Losey's adaptation of Brecht's *Galileo*, Bergman's (tiresome) *Magic Flute*. But the section also included the two best films I saw at Cannes, Marguerite Duras' *India Song* and Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's *Moses and Aaron*.

India Song was commissioned by Peter Hall for the opening of the National Theatre; given the problems on the South Bank, Mme Duras became impatient and made a film of it herself. The subject-matter is not entirely new; nine years ago, Marguerite Duras wrote a novel called *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, in which Mlle. Stein saw her lover carried off under her eyes by a certain Anne-Marie Stretter, a lady whose husband worked in the French consulate in Calcutta and who was back in France on holiday. The character of the mysterious Anne-Marie seems to have haunted Mme Duras, for she turned up again in *La Femme du Gange*. But Anne-Marie is not the only protagonist of *India Song*; there is also a beggar woman who is a kind of counterpart/double of Anne-Marie, and there is the vice-consul in Lahore. Both of these characters come from a novel called *The Vice-Consul*. So the genesis of *India Song* was long and complex. Mme Duras, however, has succeeded in fusing these various elements into a film which is not only her most accomplished to date, but also her most original work for the screen.

It is original in the first place because the film is entirely without synch dialogue. The events of the forty-eight hours in question —a ball at the Consulate, the suicide of Anne-Marie—are not narrated, but overheard. From the beginning, we hear on the soundtrack voices commenting on the action, each telling what he or she knows of the affair. In the central section of the film there are what might be called three conversations—but even these are not synchronised. This effect of remoteness (of distancing, if you will) is conjugated by the way the film is shot. There has been no attempt to re-create a realistic India of 1937. Most of the geographical details are false, and the whole film was shot in the neighbourhood of Paris; the Delta Hotel, for example, is the Trianon Palace Hotel in Versailles. Furthermore, much of the action of the central part of the film is seen in front of and through a large looking-glass: the characters often enter and leave the frame through the mirror.

As in *Hiroshima mon Amour*, Mme Duras refuses to make a distinction between the physical misery of the beggar woman and the emotional misery of Anne-Marie: one is a leper, the other is afflicted with a 'leprosy of the heart'. Nor does she distinguish between the remarkable tango music of Carlos d'Alessio which was written for the film and the 14th Diabelli Variation by Beethoven which (obviously) was not. Finally, the film could not have succeeded so well without the extraordinary performances she has conjured from her extraordinary cast—Delphine Seyrig, Michel Lonsdale, Matthieu Carrière, Claude Mann. They, and the cameraman Bruno Nuytten, all contribute to make a film which exists in and of itself; a miraculous *object*, independent of words, music and almost of significance. The old saw that 'A poem must not mean, but be' was never truer than of *India Song*; and yet it both means something, and it movingly is something.

The Straubs' **Moses and Aaron** is both a faithful rendering of Schönberg's opera and an original film in its own right. Naturally, not a note has been changed; even Schönberg's stage directions have been observed. But the film was shot not in a theatre, and not exactly in the open air. Rather, they found a miraculous compromise —the ruins of an oval-shaped Roman arena in the Abruzzi mountains, which gives a structure to the film, a shape, which is not without parallel in the 12-tone system which Schönberg used to structure the music.

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Better than Metro isn't good enough!

Hecht and MacArthur's own Movies

Geoff Brown

The Hollywood screenwriter of the 1930s traditionally led a dreadful life: once entrapped by the studios he was assigned hack work, touching up other people's shoddy material, squeezing the imagination out of famous plays and novels and forcing clichés in; his income was enormous, and so was the waste of talent. Faced with this existence, some took the money and ran, others forgot their talent and settled down happily, others came, went, and came back again, grumbling. During almost forty years in and out of Hollywood, Ben Hecht complained constantly. On his very first movie, *Underworld*, he took issue with Sternberg's treatment of his material and wanted his own credit removed; from thereon, his crusade against Hollywood's follies and fools never let up. Hollywood movies were bad, he said, because directors distracted attention from the script with fancy camerawork; producers and studio heads shunned anything adventurous; actors frittered away good dialogue by reading it witlessly; a great amount of time and money was wasted on enormous salaries (his own included) and over-extended shooting schedules.

But unlike most frustrated screenwriters of the time, Hecht had a chance to beat the system. In a fit of madness, Paramount agreed that he and his best known collaborator Charles MacArthur should take over the Astoria studios on Long Island; between 1934 and 1936 four movies emerged, written, produced and directed by the team—*Crime Without Passion*, *Once in a Blue Moon*, *The Scoundrel* and *Soak the Rich*, all of them designed, they said, for that 'intelligent minority' perpetually ignored by Hollywood. Hecht alone produced and directed his scripts into the early 1950s: Harry Cohn financed *Angels Over Broadway*, Herbert J. Yates' Republic eagle proudly presented *Spectre of the Rose*, and *Actors and Sin*, an independent production by Sid Kuller, was released through United Artists. All were recently on show at the National Film Theatre.

In his biography of MacArthur, Hecht described their time on Long Island as a 'two year party that kept going seven days a week.' Their office was festooned with large jokey banners, one of which read 'BETTER THAN METRO ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH'; games of backgammon and drinks were readily available; the sound stages teemed with festive friends and relations, New York debutantes and models, the actors, critics and impresarios of Broadway, nightclub dancers, vaudeville clowns and wrestlers—all of whom were given roles in the films. Directing this motley horde was simplicity itself, Hecht recalled: 'The actors did what the written stage directions said they should do, and recited our lines with a minimum of coaching.' While Hecht and MacArthur coached, Lee Garmes—their 'associate director' and photographer—prepared the elementary camera movements and lit the sparse décor.

Yet however cavalier the team might have been as producers and directors, as screenwriters they were in deadly earnest. Both had good reason to rejoice in their new freedom. Hecht yearned to display his literary talents, largely hidden since the 1920s, when a string of fanciful novels had emerged. Their style was weightily poetic, the dialogue and descriptions laden with outrageous similes and metaphors. To the eponymous hero of *Erik Dorn*, 'shop windows are like neighbours' bathrooms before breakfast.' He writes to his wife, 'My heart is a dancing star above the graves of your absence'; *Count Bruga* tells a lover, 'Your tears are the dancing slippers of desire,' and describes a room as being 'reminiscent of a demented lollipop.' And Hecht fashioned his own kind of hero to match the cockeyed verbiage: an artist of sorts, egotistical to the point of madness, a scoundrel who forsakes all laws and human decencies, giving in to his craven lusts with ignominious results. All these eccentricities of style and theme were to appear again in his own movies.

MacArthur, on the other hand, had no great ambitions as a creator; his talents lay in his command of stagecraft and an impish sense of fun. As a screenwriter working under usual conditions he found it hard to compromise and fake effects, unlike his collaborator, who would happily provide dialogue and plot twists for anything (except perhaps Westerns—'movies about horses for horses,' he called them). Working together without hindrance, they had many shared experiences to draw on—particularly their early years as Chicago reporters when they lovingly explored the city's underworld, with its bums and murderers, crooked lawyers and police, revolutionaries and bohemians, good-time girls, ham actors and cynical-sentimental newspaper reporters. Some of these characters appeared in *The Front Page*; all of them appeared in their own movies, with the regularity of a repertory company and with their speech and behaviour more idiosyncratic than ever.

Crime Without Passion, their first independent venture, was well received by the critics, though some cinema exhibitors and audiences had a bad time with it. A mild storm raged in *Motion Picture Herald* over its merits; when a Michigan exhibitor complained that it was 'the poorest picture ever seen in this town,' Hecht and MacArthur sent a letter, signed in pencil, denouncing him as incompetent—'Your inability to appreciate great art and advertise same to your customers is one thing that is wrong with you nitwit exhibitors.' Later they sent him a photograph with both of them in helmets and flowing beards, looking as though they were about to discover Dr. Livingstone.

'The Scoundrel': Mallare's crowded office. Alexander Woollcott standing, left, in hat

Crime Without Passion is hardly great art, though it has pretensions, particularly in the opening montage sequence devised by Slavko Vorkapich: three wild-eyed ladies draped in white rise from pools of blood, zoom up the side of skyscrapers with more speed than Superman, and break through office windows with a manic laugh, disturbing the peccadilloes of boss, secretary, and other mere mortals. These ladies, a title tells us, are the Furies, the three sisters of evil who lurk behind every man's dreams and wreck them. The movie goes on, luckily in a calmer manner, to recount the dire events in the life of Lee Gentry (Claude Rains), a crooked lawyer without peer.

Having three mythical figures on the rampage in Manhattan is a typical Hecht conceit. He loved to link his characters with the grandest gods and conquerors of mythology and history, and emissaries of Heaven and Hell seem to wait on every street corner, dealing out warnings, revenge and redemption. Here the hero is dogged by the Furies; others will be saved from their miserable existences by miracles, all of which happen, for some reason, in the rain (witness *The Scoundrel*, *Angels Over Broadway* and, of course, *Miracle in the Rain*, filmed by Rudolph Maté from Hecht's script and novel). But nowhere else do these extra-terrestrial influences receive such direct visual treatment, and nowhere else in Hollywood features did Vorkapich indulge himself to the same extent. After such a bizarre beginning, the sets and Garmes' lighting seem relatively orthodox, though the El Bravo nightclub has an expressionist tinge to it and the courtroom boasts an enormous window, through which skyscrapers lean at dizzy angles.

A short story by Hecht provides the basic plot, and combines quirks with clichés. Gentry is kin to Hecht's scoundrel artists: 'Fascinating—those insects!' he murmurs, looking down from his office on the people milling on the sidewalks. Known as the 'Champion of the Damned', he manufactures false evidence to save his clients' necks; his love affairs are brutal—as he admits himself, 'I begin where a sensible man leaves off.' The narrative line, however, is less distinctive: accidentally shooting one of his two lovers, Gentry painstakingly establishes alibi after alibi only to discover that the murdered girl isn't murdered at all, and he is left hoisted with his own petard. In his previous screen appearance, Claude Rains was either invisible or had his head swathed in bandages; here, his distinctive features are fully on display and fit the part superbly —the thin-lipped mouth uttering icy dialogue, the rakish moustache, the cold glint of madness in the eyes. Whitney Bourne, a New York socialite making her movie debut, casts a less effective chill as Katy Costello, the girl Gentry now prefers— 'a cheap little blonde, emptier than a paper bag' her rival calls her, and so she seems. Not so Margo's Carmen Brown, a New York nightclub dancer played with sultry charm by a New York nightclub dancer.

By mid-August 1934, Hecht and MacArthur had finished the script for their second Astoria film, *Once in a Blue Moon*. Overwhelmed by the critical success of *Crime Without Passion*, they decided to treat their intelligent minority to something much more bizarre—a massive piece of whimsy with a period setting and a highly eccentric cast, headed by Jimmy Savo, noted clown of burlesque and Broadway. In support were Nikita Balieff, a Russian impresario famed for his *Chauve-Souris* shows (high-class continental vaudeville), Hecht's young daughter Edwina (acting under the name Edwina Armstrong), and champion wrestler Sandor Szabo. Strict economies were dispensed with: the middle-aged *enfant terrible* George Anthiel was hired to compose original music; the company ventured out on location to the woods outside Tuxedo, New York State; Hecht-MacArthur Productions Inc. were given a trademark to herald the new movie —the name carved out of a skyscraper jungle, with two puppets dancing jerkily along the roofs.

'The Scoundrel': Noël Coward waiting for a miracle in the rain

The plot and characters, taken from a story by Rose Caylor (Hecht's wife), seem worlds removed from the authors' usual concerns. A bunch of Russian aristocrats endeavour to escape the terrors of the revolutionary régime; travelling with the clown Gabbo (Jimmy Savo), they don costumes, make-up, and 'sing and dance their way out of Red Russia.' Various adventures occur en route: counterfeit money is spread amongst the Red army and Gabbo, found with wads of it, is cruelly imprisoned, but all Russia's children race to his rescue; Bombinetti, Gabbo's beloved horse, sickens and dies; the mad General Onyegin (Nikita Balieff) gets madder. Finally, all reach Paris: Gabbo sets himself up in a crazy little shack and the aristos live in luxury.

It would need a miracle, with or without rain, to make such material palatable, and the miracle isn't forthcoming. Hecht and MacArthur's script is insipid, the performances are clumsy, and Lee Garmes' visual magic makes little impact—least of all in a predictably arch dream sequence, with Gabbo, his horse and an idolised Princess prancing about joyously. Jimmy Savo's comic gifts receive little attention; he tells a few bad jokes, juggles with eggs, tries to make a toy dog jump through a hoop, but generally he's milked for pathos rather than laughs. Fifteen years later, in the horrendous *Love Happy*, Hecht was to misuse Harpo Marx in exactly the same way. When *Once in a Blue Moon* was finally released in the spring of 1935, exhibitors complained again in the pages of *Motion Picture Herald*. This time Hecht and MacArthur kept silent; they knew they had flopped, and deservedly.

With *The Scoundrel* (1935), they returned to the vein of exotic melodrama successfully explored in *Crime Without Passion*, drawing for material on a play Hecht wrote with his wife, *All He Ever Loved*. Noël Coward's shallow, inhuman, philandering publisher Anthony Mallare is just as much a scoundrel as Lee Gentry, but far wittier with words ('It'll be a perfect match,' he notes of a suggested marriage, 'two empty paper bags belabouring each other!'). And his environment is created in greater detail. Hecht and MacArthur view New York's literary scene with acid contempt: Mallare's fancifully decorated office is crammed with all kinds of poseurs, scandal-mongers, egotistical hacks (one notes the presence of a type-cast Alexander Woollcott). On the lunatic fringe stands the poet Rotherstein (played by a grizzle-haired Lionel Stander— his first movie role). Modelled after the notoriously raffish Maxwell Bodenheim, whom Hecht caricatured in his novels *Count Bruga* and *A Jew in Love*, he lives in squalid lodgings, behaves boorishly, and writes in vivid purple ('A maid with hair like a tortured midnight!').

Another poet, Cora Moore (Julie Haydon —though the part was originally planned for Helen Hayes), is the current object of Mallare's affections. When the publisher flies to Bermuda in search of others' charms, God intervenes: victim of a plane crash, Mallare isn't allowed to be properly dead until someone is found to weep for him. On the day of reckoning he stalks the streets in a dripping mackintosh, returns to Cora, and the miracle happens. In *Future Indefinite*

'Soak the Rich': John Howard, Mary Taylor

Coward confessed that all this left him 'confused and irritated from the beginning to the end.' As *Design for Living* shows, Hecht and Coward's temperaments were hardly in accord, and Hecht's mystical streak must have struck him as bogus and in dubious taste. Yet the master epigrammatist delivers his rough-hewn lines with impeccable grace, contributes just one of his own ('H'm, h'm, h'm. Epigram. Don't give it another thought') and wrings more emotion out of the final scenes than one would have thought possible. Of all Hecht's miracles, this is the most affecting.

In *Soak the Rich* (1936), their final independent collaboration, mysticism and melodrama are cast aside; this is Hecht and MacArthur with their cap and bells on, jangling them more furiously than they ever did in *The Front Page* and *Twentieth Century*. The targets of satire are revolutionary students and the reactionary Establishment, and the treatment is determinedly broad. Students at Craig University demand the reinstatement of an unseen Professor Popper, advocate of a tax designed to soak the rich out of existence. University benefactor Humphrey Craig (an apopleptic Walter Connolly) doesn't want to be soaked, but his daughter Belinda, dubbed by the students 'the world's dopiest heiress,' joins the revolt. 'Everything has just been nothing!' she explains to the ringleader Buzz, who resists all suggestions that they are falling in love. She is then kidnapped by Muglia (Lionel Stander again), chairman of the one-man Society for the Abolition of Monstrosities, who dreams of a Utopian world named after himself; after being rescued by G-men she gives up radicalism and goes home. The implausibilities build up to a lunatically happy ending: Craig agrees to the students' demands, and hero and heroine seem destined for a life of connubial bliss.

But the mischievous firecrackers of *Soak the Rich* never quite catch fire; the performances are generally too glum (particularly that of New York model Mary Taylor playing Belinda), the staging always too slack. In their previous films, Hecht and MacArthur's direction is persistently clumsy, with ill-judged changes in camera set-ups, the actors perpetually standing in clumps, spouting in monotone, surrounded by obtrusively empty sets—but the 'style' seems perversely suited to the bleak, frigid atmosphere of *Crime Without Passion* and *The Scoundrel*. Here, with the crazy dialogue and slapstick spurts of action (Connolly's bumbling henchmen falling over furniture, the student riots), the inadequacies loom dangerously large. Photographed by Leon Shamroy, the film is flatly lit, apart from a scene with Belinda imprisoned in Muglia's murky garret, sunlight filtering through the shutters.

From now on, Hecht committed his follies alone, though he still hired Lee Garmes to help with camera movements and photography. Apart from the lightweight second half of *Actors and Sin*, the movies are swamped more than ever by Hecht's strange obsessions and bombast. *Angels Over Broadway* (1940) is a compendium of favourite themes and characters. The setting is Manhattan in the rain (it rains for a ten-hour stretch), and a whole clutch of people need redeeming: the good-time girl accustomed to bad (Rita Hayworth), the cynical sharpie (Douglas Fairbanks Jr.), the literary artist consumed by self-bitterness (Thomas Mitchell). Acting as catalyst is a mouse of a man in money troubles (John Qualen); the trio decide to pull him, and themselves, out of the mire by winning the sum required in a dangerously crooked poker game.

Hecht's character development is typically wayward. Unsurprisingly, Thomas Mitchell's failed and alcoholic playwright receives most attention: he staggers through scene after scene enunciating with considerable skill Hecht's most fustian lines to date—called a drunk by his ex-mistress, he replies, 'You understate the case by three bottles of a thousand tears.' By comparison, the meek and mild John Qualen slips through the movie almost unnoticed; Hecht needs him for the plot to work, but as a character in his own right he obviously lacks the volubility and the romantic vices to interest his creator any further. Rita Hayworth's nightclub dancer also seems more a cipher than a human being. At the end Hecht gives her the moral to spell out in words of few syllables: 'Something wonderful happened tonight—people aren't really mean, they can be better than they are!' Her conviction, however, is minimal. Fairbanks' Broadway sharpie is better defined, for he fits into the 'scoundrel' mould, but when Hecht tries to develop a love relationship with Hayworth, believability again falls away. The movie's visual appeal is just as uneven. The early stretches are full of excitement: the pavements, buildings and people gleam with moisture, the nightclub has dazzling expressionist décor. But once the scene changes to the Sunset Hotel (where the poker game is held) Garmes' lighting is drab, and our interest falters.

Spectre of the Rose (1946), Hecht's penultimate film as writer-director, remains unseen at the time of writing; Pauline Kael once called it 'whoppingly ludicrous', and so it seems from all accounts. André Sanine is the hero—a mad ballet dancer who did away with his first wife and partner, and seems all set to do away with the second. Instead he commits suicide, beautifully, by leaping out of his hotel window dancing his ballet 'Spectre of the Rose'. Hecht's short story is seemingly padded out to feature-length with extra characters, but no extra plot. Lionel Stander's poet appears again, with another haul of purple phrases quoted by contemporary reviewers. 'Your body is an exclamation point after the word beauty,' he tells the elfin heroine. Republic received much praise for financing Hecht's project, and *Motion Picture Herald* noted optimistically that its story combined 'three currently popular box-office M's—murder, music and madness,' but Hecht's manner of combining them predictably drew few queues.

For *Actors and Sin* (1952), his last fling at independent supremacy, Hecht adapted two of his old stories, one dealing with Broadway and one with Hollywood. *Actor's Blood* is another sombre exercise in strained melodrama. George Anthiel's music throbs with foreboding, all interiors are laced with shadows, and all characters are unpleasant, superficial and garrulous: Edward G. Robinson's faded actor Maurice Tillayou, insanely devoted to his daughter Marcia, whose rise and fall the narrative follows;

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'Angels Over Broadway': John Qualen, Rita Hayworth, Douglas Fairbanks Jr.

IN THE PICTURE

Adèle H.

Even if unaware that it housed the offices of Les Films du Carrosse, François Truffaut's production company, one would be drawn to make a comparison between the rue Robert Estienne, a modestly picturesque cul-de-sac off the Champs-Elysées, and some studio set: memories of Clair, Becker, perhaps even the matching courtyards of Renoir's *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* and Truffaut's own *Domicile Conjugal*. On one wall of the office itself is an enlarged *Peanuts* strip (Linus tearing out his hair as Lucie reveals the meaning of Rosebud); on another, in poster form, the headline 'Kane Found With Singer In Love-Nest'.

When I spoke to him, Truffaut had just finished editing his fourteenth feature, *L'Histoire d'Adèle H.*, written, as almost always, with Jean Gruault and the indispensable Suzanne Schiffman. Adèle, played by Isabelle Adjani, was Victor Hugo's younger daughter, who shared her father's exile in the Channel Islands until she met, at one of the table-turning séances organised by the poet, a young English lieutenant, Albert Pinson, and fell in love with him. One can no longer know for certain whether or not they were engaged to be married: in Adèle's mind there was no doubt, but the Englishman would appear to have treated the affair as a passing flirtation and soon departed with his regiment to Halifax in Nova Scotia. Whereupon, Adèle herself upped and left, following the man she considered her fiancé halfway across the Empire but never conclusively tracking him down.

Should the initial H suggest a case-history? I asked Truffaut. 'Not really. Adèle was the less loved of Hugo's two daughters—the favourite, Léopoldine, drowned with her husband in 1843—and often travelled incognito. She was, you understand, the daughter of the most famous man in the world, a fact of which she was proud but which must have occasioned a certain suffering. Perhaps this might better explain her desire, or should I say *idée fixe*, to conceal her identity, to exchange the too famous name of Hugo, which was not hers but her father's, for another. And identity, I suppose, is the real subject of the film.

'If, as I'm sometimes reproached, my films are in contradiction with the age I live in, it's perhaps in the sympathy I continue to feel for anyone who must struggle to gain entry to a society from which he was excluded at the outset. This is the theme of the Antoine Doinel films. It's also the theme of *L'Enfant Sauvage*, which I made at a time when many young people, hardly older than the child in my film, were throwing off their culture, and their clothes, and practically going to live in the forest! If *L'Enfant Sauvage* depicted a creature desirous of acquiring an identity—and that he *desired* it, I truly believe—Adèle's concern is to lose one which she can never consider her own.'

Oddly enough, it was in 1969, whilst shooting *L'Enfant Sauvage*, that Truffaut came across Adèle's diaries, which had been decoded and edited by an American, Frances Vernor Guille. The earlier film, too, was based on a journal, which gave it a kind of rigour unusual in his work but shared, he feels, by *Adèle*. 'Though I've also tried to give it something of the intensity of *Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent*.'

Truffaut spoke of the extent to which he is willing to 'remake' his works. 'If a film has failed to satisfy either the public or myself, I have a fantasy about starting it all over again. Which is impossible, of course, but I do attempt to avoid the same mistakes in any later film dealing with a similar emotional situation. If, for example, the public refused to accept the character played by Jean Desailly in *La Peau Douce*, it was doubtless because when I adopt the point of view of a male character I have a tendency to make him—not exactly weak, but like a child. So, in *Domicile Conjugal*, where I re-employed certain themes of *La Peau Douce*, it was from a more frankly comic angle and with an actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud, whom the public has never ceased to consider as a child. Likewise, in *L'Enfant Sauvage*, I now believe I was wrong not to disclose what finally happened to the child, and you'll see that at the end of *Adèle* I've used a montage of photographs and documentation so that no one will be left in ignorance of her fate.'

For Isabelle Adjani, a young actress who became a *pensionnaire* of the Comédie-Française at the rather unlikely age of 17, Adèle Hugo is a first major film role. 'What excited me most,' said Truffaut, 'was working with an actress who is still evolving, still developing. It was exactly the same with Léaud, which is, incidentally, why there can be no further chapter in the Doinel series.' In a few weeks, however, Truffaut is planning to shoot a film whose cast will consist almost entirely of children between the ages of six months and twelve years, *L'Argent de Poche*. 'I intend it to have a much more controlled narrative line than would be possible with a mere collection of sketches, but still be free enough to let me improvise as much as I can. Otherwise, what is the point of filming children? You see, everything a child does in a film, it's as if he were doing it for the first time. So it's as precious as a home movie.'

I asked him finally what sort of reaction to, say, *L'Histoire d'Adèle* would please him most. 'I don't really want to make an audience cry. In a way, that's too easy. Perhaps I'd prefer that they *tremble*—yes, that's it, tremble.' How would he feel, then, if some manager felt obliged to place a sign outside his cinema, declining any responsibility for shock caused by the film? Truffaut laughed. 'Oh, you can't know how proud I'd be!'

GILBERT ADAIR

Love Among the Ruins

George Cukor is not of course the first of the major Hollywood survivors to dabble in television—Ford and Hitchcock did so, to look no further—but *Love Among the Ruins* is the first full-scale movie-for-television to be made by one of the warranted greats, and as such it calls for notice.

Isabelle Adjani in 'L'Histoire d'Adèle H'

Its remarkably lofty cast is headed by Katharine Hepburn and Laurence Olivier; the screenplay is by James Costigan, himself a classic survivor from the 'golden age' of American television drama in the 1950s. So it is hardly surprising that the small screen première in the States had a rare sense of occasion, and was rapidly followed by a theatrical première (to a standing-room-only house) as part of Los Angeles Filmex.

In view of all the expectations aroused, it was virtually inevitable that there should be a slight sense of disappointment with the finished product. The troubles seem to stem from the script, which apparently began life eight years ago as a television play (studio-bound, that is, and running no more than ninety minutes minus commercials) for the Lunts to follow up their big success in *The Magnificent Yankee* on television.

Alfred Lunt's health did not permit production, and the script was shelved until Katharine Hepburn was interested in it as a possible means of realising her long-standing ambition to work with Olivier. At which point it was revised to open it out as a film and expand it to two hours length. In the process it seems to have become over-extended; one could guess which scenes were added largely by observing the places at which a point made quite briskly and economically in one scene is immediately restated in a following scene with elaborations. And it is, not coincidentally, in these water-treading scenes that things seem to go wrong elsewhere, particularly in a certain failure of conviction among the players.

All the same, *Love Among the Ruins* has its pleasures to offer. The 'ruins' are Katharine Hepburn as a rich widow now involved in an embarrassing breach of promise case brought by a young bounder, and Laurence Olivier as the distinguished lawyer briefed to defend her, who once, forty years earlier and now quite forgotten by the lady, had a brief but passionate affair with her while she was a young actress on tour. Their new encounter is developed in a manner which occasionally aims at high comedy but usually settles for farce. Both people, that is, are called upon to act in an obviously foolish fashion which seems to sort ill with what we are told of their characters and histories. Her folly in the central courtroom scene is not at all justified by a last minute piece of explanatory sleight-of-hand (bad habits of old-time television technique on the writer's part?); while the spectacle of Olivier behaving like a lovesick schoolboy to the ruination of his professional competence as a lawyer is neither edifying nor convincing.

But in their better written scenes, when the relationship remains barbed and adult, they play together immaculately and make it clear that Cukor has lost none of his old precision with actors. (It is extraordinary to reflect that it is 43 years since he directed Hepburn in her first film, *A Bill of Divorcement*.) As far as the visual style is concerned, Cukor seems deliberately to have avoided what people assume to be the natural style for television: there are remarkably few close-ups, and almost no tight close-ups in the film at all. On television, even a good large colour set, this is sometimes irritating, though perhaps cunningly so—we want to know exactly what the principals look like, ruinous or not, and the chiaroscuro of the opening scene does not really allow us to. Otherwise, the technique is generally unobtrusive, on the small screen at least. Interestingly, the major exception—the second big scene between the principals—becomes evident only in a theatrical showing, when one registers that it is shot almost entirely in one long and intricate moving-camera shot; a fact of which I and a couple of other Cukor enthusiasts with whom I saw the film had been totally oblivious first time round.

The overall effect of playing and direction seems far broader on a large screen than on a small—an indication, perhaps, that Cukor was planning his effects for television with a precision that one would not immediately recognise. For all that, the film is still very much a film. The amount of dialogue, and the heightened, even at times epigrammatic style, inevitably recalls some of Cukor's earlier adaptations from the theatre, particularly *The Philadelphia Story* and *Holiday*. Would that James Costigan were in the same league as Philip Barry. But that, no doubt, would be asking too much.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Fantastique

That the Paris screenings of *It's Alive*, *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* and *The Phantom of the Paradise* were commercially disappointing can evidently be attributed to ill-judged distribution, for the policy of opening them at expensive cinemas on the Champs-Elysées and elsewhere inhibited the attendance of the student audience. Certainly the 4th Festival International de Paris du Film Fantastique et de Science Fiction —in terms of audience size alone the biggest film event of the Paris season—demonstrated the extent of the following for the genre.

Under the supervision of Alain Schlockoff—who at 27 is editor of two fantasy/sci-fi magazines, *Horizons du Fantastique* and *L'Ecran Fantastique*, as well as organiser of a small fantasy film distribution company—the Festival has moved from its former overcrowded, rundown cinema settings (the Palace, since returned post-haste to its music-hall origins, and the Ciné-Monge, since closed) and into the huge (3,700 seats) Palais des Congrès at Porte Maillot. Nearly all the programmes were sold out.

The majority of the films scheduled had their Paris premières, and four their world premières: *The Ghoul* and *Legend of the Werewolf* by the ubiquitous Freddie Francis, *I Don't Want to be Born* by Peter Sasdy, and *The Hephaestus Plague* by Jeannot Szwarc. When the jury announced its award of the grand prize Golden Unicorn to *The Hephaestus Plague*, the crowd roared its approval. Although the U.S. entry, produced by William Castle, about fire-creating super-cockroaches, was effective enough *per se*, at least some of the enthusiasm was no doubt attributable to Szwarc's being a French national. Certainly his speech to the audience was the first time in a full week that French could be heard emanating from either stage or screen.

'Love Among the Ruins': Katharine Hepburn, Laurence Olivier

Although there are occasional French productions within the genre, one habitually hears invoked the names of Franju and Resnais (for *Je t'aime, je t'aime*) to prove that the French are indeed capable of creating quality fantasy and science fiction. The more usual product is represented best (if that is the word) by Michel Lemoine's gory mixtures of soft-core porno and blood, which inspire a sense of horror only in their lack of imagination. Alain Schlockoff maintains that: 'There is no real tradition in France of fantastic and science-fiction cinema, in spite of Méliès, nor in literature. There is Jules Verne and then there is no one.' In choosing H. P. Lovecraft's *Island of the Demon* as the basis for a film he is now preparing to produce and direct, Schlockoff seems to bear out this conviction.

The Festival was, strictly speaking, international, but the majority of the films were either British or American, with only a single film each from Germany, Spain, Switzerland and Italy, and even these carried English soundtracks. Still, save for a low buzz of whispered translations, the audience might well have been watching films in London or New York for the general lack of impatience they displayed over language difficulties. They seemed particularly pleased by the mini-retrospective devoted to Hammer films, many of which have not been seen here for years, if ever—a somewhat puzzling state of affairs considering the cult followings here of Terence Fisher, Michael Carreras and Val Guest.

Those of us less convinced of the high quality of Hammer's output were afforded sporadic little surprises elsewhere: *Rads 1001* by the young Italian director Giorgio Treves, a terrifyingly powerful short set in the wasteland of an atomic war's aftermath; a midnight screening of Robert Florey's 1932 expressionist masterpiece *Murders in the Rue Morgue*; two films of Dan Curtis for American television, the full length *Dracula* with Jack Palance, and *Amelia*, in which a killer doll comes to life to terrify both Karen Black and the audience. These compensated somewhat for the excessive gore that substituted for imaginative terror in a film like Antony Balch's *Horror Hospital*, and for the unfortunate influence of *The Exorcist* on films like Alberto de Martino's *Anti-Christ*

George C. Scott and Robert Wise with model of the Hindenburg

and Peter Sasdy's *I Don't Want to be Born*, in which demonic possession is blamed for everything except the cheap effects and the silly plots.

As if twenty-seven such films weren't enough to keep Parisians sufficiently supplied with nightmares, Stephen Bourgoin gathered together eight more films for yet another (mini-)festival. But Le Premier Festival du Film Fantastique de La Clef was less well attended than might have been the case had the cinema been more accessible and the price less than twelve francs per film. Furthermore, the daily, and deadly dull, chapters of the 1934 Ray Taylor-Bela Lugosi serial, *The Return of Chandu*, only served to demonstrate why it had disappeared for forty years.

The generally tame quality of such entries as Mark McGee's *Equinox*, Richard Quine's *W* and Larry Hagman's *Beware the Blob* helps only in part to explain why the first prize went to Stephen Weeks' mild *Ghost Story*. A possible further explanation may have been the lack of a jury, the winner being determined by audience ballot. Since at least one non-festival audience (for an early morning showing of *Death in Venice*) was seen to drop their stubs into ballot boxes marked plus and minus as they left the cinema, perhaps it was actually Visconti who won—which is rather fantastic in itself.

DAVID L. OVERBEY

Censorship in France

A year ago already President Giscard d'Estaing had made it known that he envisaged a drastic reform of film censorship in France, and he has repeated that view more recently. In accordance with this political attitude, the practice of the French censors has in some respects become more liberal in recent months. But, as in Sweden at the time of the Bergman (*The Silence*) and Sjöman (*491*) affairs, it is more a matter of the censorship board (the Commission de Contrôle Cinématographique) keeping basically to its old ways and the liberalism coming from direct governmental overruling of its decisions. It did in fact pass uncut the Franco-Italian co-production *La Messe Dorée*, a 'poetic allegory on sex and religion', which the Italians totally banned as obscene. But it proposed a ban on *Les Bijoux de Famille*, described by Jacques Siclier as 'du Buñuel pornographique', and it was the Minister for Culture, M. Michel Guy, who passed it for showing. Other proposed bans are on an American documentary on drug addiction of a Vietnam veteran, *Skezag*, and a short, *Megalopolis*, which attacks the army and the police.

The intention now is to formalise the Government's liberalising view, in line with the proposed introduction of a wider legal protection of fundamental rights, now being discussed by the recently appointed Presidential Commission to draw up a Bill of Rights. On 30 April 1975 the French Cabinet approved a Bill containing the reform proposals of M. Guy, which would restrict censorship to films which infringe respect for human dignity (e.g. extreme violence or incitement to drugs), all political and pornography censorship being excluded. The present system of censorship of films shown to children will be retained, as will control over the export of certain films for diplomatic reasons.

But to some extent, while the door is being opened legislatively, the window is being closed economically. There is to be increased control over publicity (which is probably the price for any censorship liberalisation—see the recent GLC proposals and the Swedish and Danish laws), which will extend further than usual, to pre-censorship of publicity material which can extend to a ban on any form of publicity for 'certain films', on the lines presumably of the strict system of 'interdiction à l'affichage' in operation for books. Also a form of financial censorship is to be introduced, involving the abolition of all automatic financial aid to 'pornographic films' which do not have manifest artistic quality and, for foreign pornographic imports, the imposition of a special tax. The existing censorship commission will be given the task of deciding which films shall bear this financial sanction, which is also foreshadowed in the top rate VAT at present applied in France to pornographic books.

Consequently, although the change will be important legally (and that should not be underestimated), the practical difference will be more *nuancé*. There is a certain hint of the American approach—that obscenity is outside the protection of free speech, while political and other forms of expression are protected. But to some extent the new French system could be more liberal than the American, in that the sanction for pornography will be economic rather than legal, although that sanction will still be imposed by prior restraint exercised by a classic censorship board. As a report in *Le Monde* put it: aesthetic pornography, the erotic fantasies of the intellectuals, will be accepted and subsidised, while the vulgar pornography for everyman will be excluded. But then the latter is already a highly profitable enterprise, and can be expected to become even more so if it is freed from the *clandestinité* or prohibitions of the existing system. It will be interesting to see how the censorship commission applies its financial censorship and whether the ordinary criminal law is applied.

NEVILLE HUNNINGS

The Hindenburg

Studio 12 on the Universal lot has a disastrous history. On this set a Boeing 747 was struck by a twin-engine private plane and narrowly avoided a calamitous crash; the entire city of Los Angeles was reduced to rubble; now the Third Reich's propaganda weapon of 1937, a massive, swastika-bedecked dirigible, is about to be blown to bits by a saboteur's bomb.

Robert Wise's *The Hindenburg* is the current occupant. Principal photography is finished and the special effects men are now at work—the same team which made *Earthquake* such an unnerving experience. (In fact, *Earthquake* received two Oscars for Special Achievement in Visual Effects and Scientific/Technical Achievement *before* the customary April presentations.) These special effects men are now faced with a new problem—the dirigible disaster of May 6th, 1937 at Lakehurst, New Jersey, in which 13 passengers and 22 crew died. Although the cause of the explosion was never officially explained, Wise and his script-writer Nelson Gidding, using material from a book by Michael MacDonald Mooney, suggest that a saboteur destroyed the Hindenburg as an act of resistance against the Nazi regime. The screenplay has the narrator of the actual newsreel footage of the explosion state that 'the Third Reich could not admit that a Resistance—much less a single saboteur—had brought down the great symbol of Nazi power . . . Marshal Goering and Dr. Goebbels had ordered what amounted to perjury at Lakehurst.'

'The stock footage of the explosion is better than anything we might have shot ourselves,' Wise says. 'The newsreel cameramen got it all on film—the flames, the passengers falling from the ship, the pandemonium on the ground, everything. It's really remarkable material.' Wise is no stranger to the catastrophe genre. In 1951 he directed the anti-bomb allegory *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. Twenty years later he made *The Andromeda Strain*, an all too plausible story of a space satellite returning to earth contaminated with a deadly micro-organism, released at about the time the moon rocks were on display.

The scene I watch has the Hindenburg caught in an electrical storm over the Atlantic. It is a difficult sequence, but the special effects crew works with practised economy of effort. Scampering along the monorail scaffolding fifty feet above the floor, a young apprentice prepares to discharge patches of fog from a cloud-making machine, a device that

resembles a long boom microphone. 'You don't want to breathe too much of this stuff,' he tells me when I climb the scaffolding. After trying to inhale at that height I see what he means, although it doesn't seem to bother him. 'I don't breathe up here,' he says. In fact, injuries are not uncommon. On *Earthquake* one of the stunt men was nearly asphyxiated when, engulfed in flames, he had the oxygen supply in his asbestos suit run out; another made a 35-foot jump from a crumbling building, only to discover painfully that the sawdust padding was inadequate.

I descend from the scaffolding to talk to Clifford Stine, the man shooting all this mayhem (Robert Surtees did the principal photography). Stine is a veteran in special effects cinematography. Perhaps his most remarkable achievement was *The Incredible Shrinking Man* in 1957, also for Universal, but his credits go back to the George Schaefer days at RKO, a studio he remembers fondly. He also recalls that Robert Wise started his career in the RKO cutting room. Stine supervises the storm shooting from his throne atop the camera boom: a Buddha with a cigar to whom all come for advice, suggestions and approval.

The dirigible itself, designed by Edward Carfagno, looks a masterpiece of authenticity, an art director's dream. Carfagno, who perfected his craft at MGM under Cedric Gibbons, has recreated all the grandeur of Count Zeppelin's 'Queen of the Skies'. As the airship begins its forward movement across the cavernous set, heavy clouds surround it, while simulated lightning traces an arc across its bow. It is an ethereal, ghostly sight; one realises that despite the drawing power of the film's two principals, George C. Scott and Anne Bancroft, the star is the Hindenburg itself.

Wise emphasises that *The Hindenburg* is for him not just another entry in the disaster stakes, 'though of course the final scenes *are* spectacular . . .' Meanwhile *Variety* reports that in Italy six directors are pooling their talents to give us *Disaster all' Italiana*, the story of 'the Messina earthquake of 1908 that caused the death of 90,000 Sicilians . . . Sergio Leone is producing.' Leone might consider flying the men of Studio 12 to Cinecittà.

PETER STAMELMAN

Bergman's Magic Flute

Music has always been close to Ingmar Bergman's heart. *To Joy* (1949) took its title from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and featured Victor Sjöström as a distinguished conductor—a calling, incidentally, that attracted Bergman himself. Then there have been significant snatches of Bach in movies like *Through a Glass Darkly*, *The Silence* and *Cries and Whispers*. So his production of *The Magic Flute*, made for Swedish TV and screened at Cannes in May, is perhaps not so startling a departure as one might assume. (After all, *Hour of the Wolf* was richly laden with references to Mozart's opera.) The fact that it was made for TV suggests not merely the straitened circumstances of the commercial cinema in Sweden, but primarily Bergman's conviction that only through TV can he now reach a wide audience at a single stroke. He has indeed since shot another serial in four parts, *Face to Face*, for both theatrical and small screen release.

The budget for *The Magic Flute* was some £260,000, seemingly immense by Swedish standards but regarded by Sveriges Radio as an appropriate project with which to celebrate its fifty years of broadcasting. Bergman spent a year on the production, selecting a predominantly Scandinavian cast of singers from over a hundred candidates. 'The most important factor for me,' he claimed, 'was that the singers should have natural voices. You can find artificially cultivated voices that sound marvellous, but you can never really believe that a human personality is doing the singing. Records have accustomed us to a kind of absolute perfection—but beauty cannot be perfect without also being vibrant and alive.'

Far from attempting to open out the opera, Bergman has been at pains to recreate the atmosphere of the 1791 production at the Theater auf der Weiden in Vienna (even the dragon that pursues Tamino upstage is a delightful creature of felt and bunting). The Drottningholm Palace Theatre proved too fragile to accommodate a TV crew, so the stage was carefully reconstructed in the studios of the Swedish Film Institute, under the direction of Henny Noremark.

While the Mozart purist may take issue with Bergman's conception of *The Magic Flute*, no one can deny the technical perfection with which the film has been mounted. The score was sung, played, and recorded by the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Eric Ericson, and then replayed in segments in the film studio until Bergman was satisfied with both lip-synchronisation and performances. Everyone sings (in Swedish, of course) with gusto.

When does an opera become a film? Certainly in Act Two, when the Queen of the Night, her face transformed into a mask of fury by waxen make-up and a livid green filter, harangues Pamina in 'Der Hölle Rache'. And certainly in the climactic sequence when Monostatos and his minions advance threateningly towards the camera. In spite of such *frissons*, and for all the inevitable skulls that mock the hapless Papageno in the House of Trials, this is a witty, rumbustious *Flute*, played and sung at fast tempo throughout. During the film, Bergman cuts back occasionally to the seraphic features of a small girl in his 'audience', dwelling on her pleasure as if nudging us into recognition of the opera's 'childish magic and exalted mystery.' It's somehow a superfluous, sentimental gesture, uncharacteristic of Bergman.

As Papageno and Papagena frolic with their children in the final shot, one is left in no doubt as to the meaning of the opera in Bergman's eyes. Like his own best films, it embodies a quest, and Sarastro, so often a grave and sombre figure, is seen by Bergman as the paternal source of that exalted love sought in their different ways by Tamino and Papageno. It is as though Bergman's own predilection for chilly metaphysics had been tempered by Mozart's sense of wonder.

Bergman has said that he may well proceed to film other operas, with *Don Giovanni* next on the list. *Aficionados* should note that Swedish Radio has issued an attractive boxed set of the recording, containing a booklet with Bergman's comments on the libretto.

PETER COWIE

VAT on films and the EEC

In view of the failure of the performing arts to gain any alleviation of their VAT burden in the recent UK budget, it should not be forgotten that the proposals for harmonising VAT in the Common Market have their relevance. The Minister for the Arts, when he implied last February that he was prevented by EEC rules from zero-rating theatre tickets, was apparently misinformed, for the existing Community rules leave full discretion on that point in the hands of the member states.

But the draft 6th VAT directive is different. It is intended to harmonise the VAT system throughout the Community (but not the actual percentage rates). It has a section on exemptions, article 14, which provides for mandatory exemption from VAT for theatres, cinema clubs, concert halls, museums, etc. if they are not operated for profit or are public corporations.

There is a double discrimination here for the cinema. First, the ordinary commercial sector is excluded. The National Theatre, Covent Garden, municipal theatres will be exempt; the Palladium, the Shaftesbury Avenue theatres and any other independent theatres which may have survived will have to bear the tax. Secondly, especially for films, the exemption only applies to 'cinema clubs'. So even a municipally run cinema will have to pay VAT, but the National Film Theatre and film societies will presumably not.

'The Magic Flute': Monostatos and his minions

Jack Nicholson in Milos Forman's 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest', from the book by Ken Kesey

The situation is slightly complicated by the UK system of zero-rating, which is a British invention and is particularly beneficial to the tax payer, since he not only does not have to charge tax to the consumer ('exemption') but actually gets paid back the tax he has already paid out when he bought the goods from his wholesaler. In theory, the EEC system does not like zero-rating, and in the 6th draft directive only existing zero-rating is permitted to continue. Books and newspapers will, therefore, continue in Britain as they are—until the actual VAT rates are harmonised by the EEC some time in the probably remote future. It could be argued that zero-rating is a form of exemption and therefore could be applied to article 14 cases; but that would require altering article 28 of the draft directive.

In any case, however, whether the NFT is exempted or zero-rated, no VAT will be payable on its box-office receipts—so long as it comes within the definition of 'cinema club'. But the draft directive contains no such definition. As it is almost certainly based on the French concept of 'ciné-club', which is a very peculiar type of institution, closely controlled by restrictive legislation and supervised by the Centre National de la Cinématographie, there may be problems in fitting the looser type of British film society, not to mention the much more peculiar NFT, into that category.

The sensible and culturally proper solution would, of course, be to remove the second discrimination altogether and provide that cinemas should be treated in exactly the same way as theatres. But that would mean educating our legislators, both nationally and in the EEC, out of their elderly superciliousness and into an awareness of the general cultural importance of the cinema. Removal of the first discrimination, between the tax treatment of the private and public sector, would be still more difficult, in view of the historically embedded attitudes especially in France and Germany to the link between the state and 'culture'.

The draft directive was submitted by the E.C. Commission to the Council two years ago. It was heavily criticised by the European Parliament (but not on these points) and resubmitted in a revised version, which is at present under discussion by national representatives. If any alteration is to be made to article 14, there is not a great deal of time.

NEVILLE HUNNINGS

Days of Hope

The Goodies may have picked up a Silver Rose at Montreux (with a programme, incidentally, which relied on the cinema for its jokes), but by and large this is not a good year for British television. Not least in drama, which rightly or wrongly has always been regarded by foreign observers as the litmus test of what Milton Shulman has called 'the least worst television in the world'. Watching the current series of the BBC's 'Play for Today', one can't avoid the impression that British television drama has not so much reached an impasse as arrived at a crossroads; and not knowing where to go, it is setting off—usually with unsteady gait—in all directions. Even the terminology (television 'play' when so much is filmed or taped or shot on location) is uncertain.

But there have been a few bright lights, among them the Stephen Frears-Alan Bennett film *Sunset Across the Bay* or Dennis Potter's imaginative four-part adaptation of Angus Wilson's novel *Late Call*. And in September the BBC is showing what could be one of the television 'drama' events of this or any year. The production team is promise enough. Produced by Tony Garnett, directed by Ken Loach, written by Jim Allen (who also wrote *Rank and File* and *The Big Flame* for the Garnett-Loach partnership), *Days of Hope* is an ambitious series of four films centred round the experiences of an English working-class family during the period from the outbreak of the First World War until the aftermath of the 1926 General Strike.

The original idea was for a single film, based on a script by Jim Allen set in 1921, the time of the miners' lock-out and the Emergency Powers Act. Loach and Garnett had intended to make it as a feature film, but there were problems with finance. When the chance came to make it for television, Loach says, they used it to advantage. 'We thought the idea would work better if instead of having to put all we wanted to say into one film we could make several films, so that you would see the characters going through a whole set of experiences. These experiences would then be cumulative, making the point we wanted to make in a general way rather than through a particular event.' So the first film, for instance, has one man volunteering for the army and another as a conscientious objector; in later films the historical perspective includes the Irish rebellion as well as the General Strike.

Why the switch to a historical subject, when Loach and Garnett have been associated with contemporary and more urgent themes? Loach thinks it may have something to do with the mood of the last year or so in Britain, a general sense of history repeating itself. 'But in any case we felt that what has happened in recent history—in this century—has never been recorded in a way that is accessible to most people. The working class has no "history". So we wanted to show what happened, and the implications of what happened—to shake some of the myths about the General Strike, for instance.'

As with several of his previous television plays, *Days of Hope* includes a number of non-professional actors. In the film about the General Strike, for instance, there are people with long experience of trade union activity. 'To have these people in the film and not use their lifetime's rehearsal would be a terrible waste. They can really contribute from their own experience. But what they contribute is absolutely within the spirit of what Jim Allen has written. When people talk about improvisation, they think of it as anti-author, but I find it's the reverse of that. By using people with actual experience we're hoping to achieve something of the same effect that Robert Vas got with interviews in his documentary film on the General Strike.'

Days of Hope was made on film. Loach hasn't worked on videotape since *Up the Junction*, and sees the move to tape as a retrogressive step. 'The texture of the picture you get is quite different, the whole business is different. You can't observe it quietly, as you can film; you can't touch it and handle it and manoeuvre it. It's very cumbersome, whereas the way we try to work is to be as discreet and unobtrusive as we can, to keep the technology in its place. The moment you have a whole VTR unit around it's another circus altogether.' The films have been nearly three years in the making—the equivalent in effort, Loach says, of three films for the cinema. The whole enterprise also reflects a gradual slowing down in his working method; when he and Garnett first got together on the BBC's 'Wednesday Play' series, they were making up to six programmes a year.

DAVID WILSON

The Bottom of the Garden

'Once upon a time there grew in the fabulous forest of film festivals a tiny new tree, all gay and bright and eager to catch the eye, which of course wasn't so easy among the giants towering around it. But the little new one didn't lose heart. "I may be small," it chirped, "but the soil from which I grew is rich in goodwill and cheer. As for my place in the sun, it certainly isn't the biggest, but it's a happy spot . . . easy-going, leisurely, just the thing in fact for good companionship, with sights to see and nights of glee, sunny days and nights—well, I guess I already mentioned them, but oh, so bright and breezy . . ." Then after a while it couldn't help itself and giggled bashfully: "Besides, the girls here have a saying of old: 'The night's our own,' they say, and you know . . ." But now the old poet shushed the naughty little upstart, very sternly indeed, although he couldn't quite hide the laughter in his eyes . . .'

—Announcement of the First Fairy-tale Film Festival, to be held in Odense to commemorate the centenary of the death of Hans Christian Andersen

HUSTON IN MOROCCO

Gideon Bachmann

My first meeting with John Huston took place on the set of a film that must surely rank, even for his most devoted admirers, in the lower ranges. Dodging a rain of birds' excrement descending from the rafters of Noah's Ark one cold January day in 1965, I had come upon a bearded figure dressed in an old sack, surrounded by the most incredible cacophony of animal claustrophobia-turned-voice, calmly nuzzling the soft, floppy underlip of a giraffe. It was Huston playing Noah in his own *Bible* film, and it was an irrevocably endearing image.

Even then Huston was talking of making a film based on *The Man Who Would Be King*, Kipling's story of the two men who set out to conquer fate in Victoria's India, succeed, and then fail because of what he calls *folie de grandeur*. He was hoping to make it as his next film, having given up on it twice before, once when Bogart died, and once when Gable died; the two men who were to play the two daredevils. But another ten years were to pass before the project materialised. Now Michael Caine and Sean Connery replace his original choices. This March I went to Morocco and in the Atlas Mountains watched him realise his twenty-year dream.

March 18, 1975

Nobody in Casablanca has heard of John Huston. Not many films have been shot in Morocco; some sequences for *Lawrence of Arabia*, some Hollywood location exteriors, *Young Winston*, some British films. There isn't a film industry. Egyptian films supply the Arabic market; American and Italian ones are dubbed into French, the Other Language, colonial heritage. The town is like a cross between Tel Aviv and Accra, mostly whitewashed concrete, and often grey-washed and yellow-washed. The centre is all high-rise hotels and airlines, but even the peripheral streets, dusty and donkey-trodden, don't exactly evoke Sidney Greenstreet or Peter Lorre. Sam wouldn't play here, certainly not again.

March 19

Marrakesh has had time to settle; it has been here since the 11th century, when a rebel Berber captain took away his chieftain's army, wife and camp during the poor man's absence, and called the site 'Walk-fast' or Marroukch, nowadays translated from the Arabic pronunciation of Ma Rakksh to mean the opposite: 'Don't hurry'. Or so the local folklore etymologises. No industry pollutes its limpid air, a thousand years of cultural heritage have left no museum atmosphere. The snake charmers in the Jema'a-al-Fna square and the bargains in the souks seem genuine.

The winding road to the set, about 20 miles into the Atlas foothills. Red country, red walls, red earth, red villages. Two hills have been planed for the construction of Kafiristani towns; today the crews mass at the one inhabited, in Kipling's story, by the descendants of Alexander the Great, eternally awaiting the return of his son, whom they deify. It seems I have come at a culminating moment: protected by myth, by the impact of a few rusty rifles upon the minds of a pagan people, and by their cleverness in steering fate, Dravot and Carnehan (Connery and Caine) have now come to the end of their tether. The priest caste of Sikandergul has decided that one who succumbs to women cannot possibly be a god; and Connery has succumbed, alas. The two and their stolen treasure are chased, one to his death on a severed rope bridge and the other back to his humble origins in Lahore. Here, after triumph and disaster, he meets Christopher Plummer at his roll-top newspaper desk, playing Kipling and providing, as the latter did in life, the moral of it all.

I have missed the battles, the processions, the triumphs, but I'm in time for the disasters. The special effects men are busy

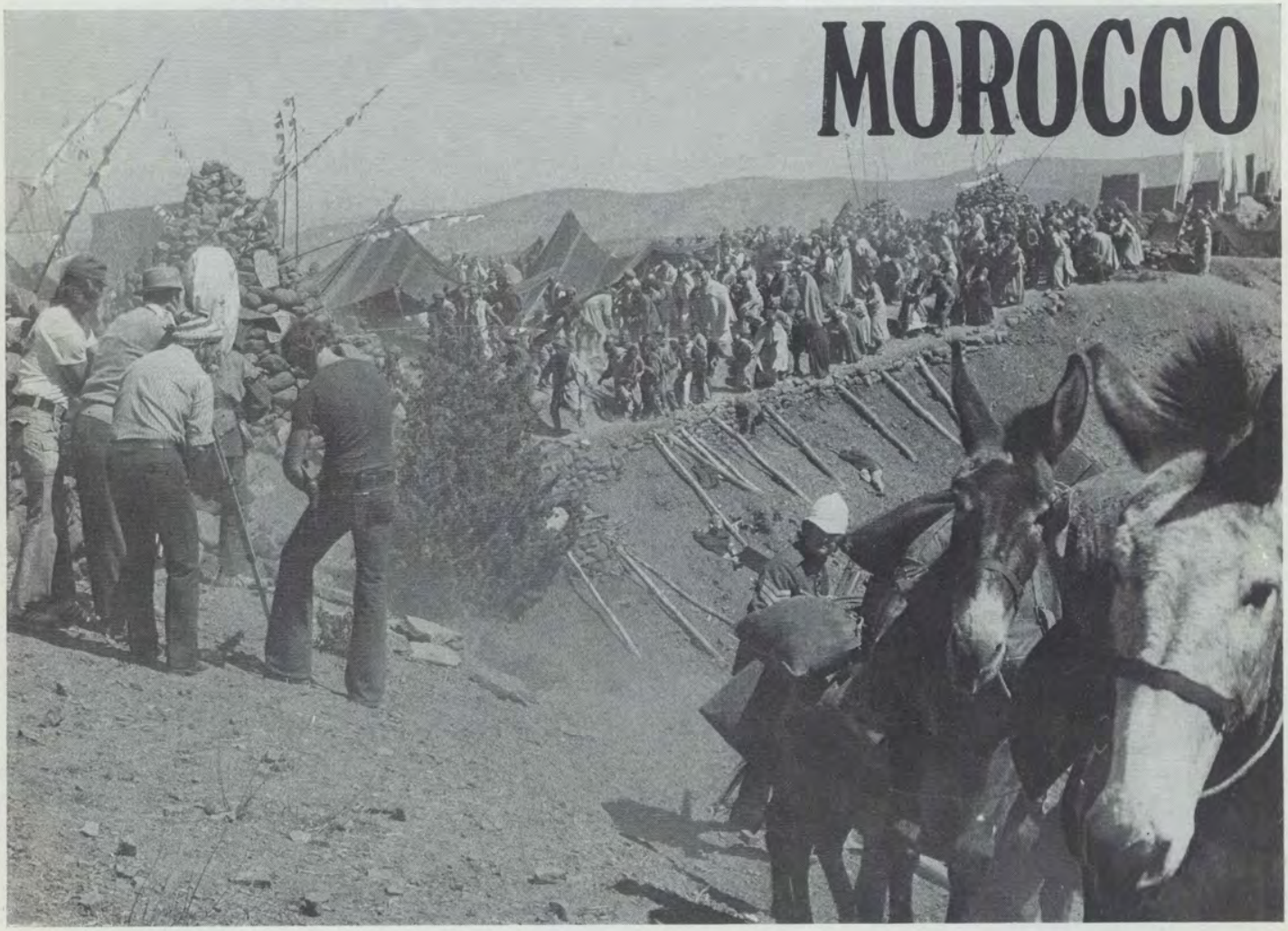
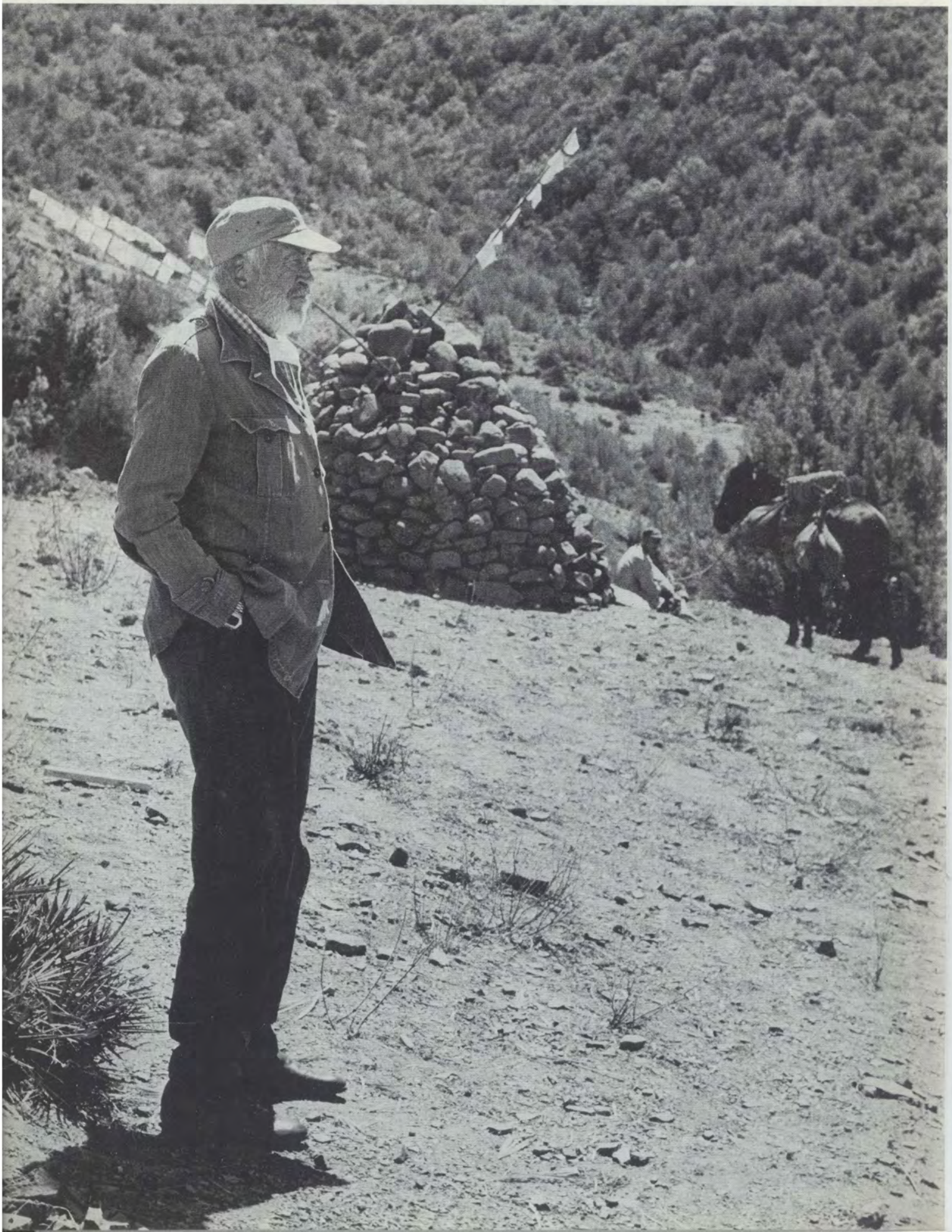


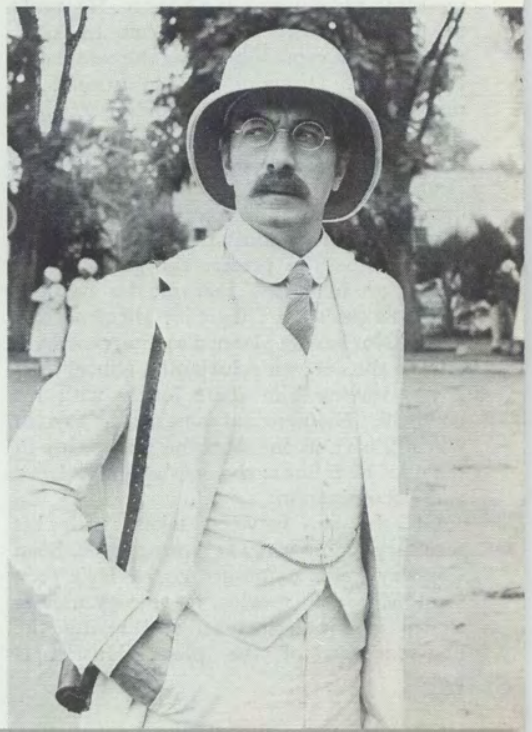
Photo: Gideon Bachmann

THE MAN WHO



WOULD BE KING

Right: Sean Connery, Christopher Plummer, Michael Caine. Below right: Plummer as Kipling. Left: photograph of John Huston by Gideon Bachmann



setting up the escape route along a narrow mountain path which the heroes with their mule train are to fail to take. There is a circus of vans, donkeys, mules and bicycles; 1,200 extras are playing Kafiristani monks and soldiers; every morning they arrive, creeping up the horizon at sunrise and settling in the surrounding countryside, waiting for their calls around small fires brewing endless teas flavoured with jasmin and mint.

Perhaps I won't manage, during my stay, to receive a really satisfactory answer to why the film is being shot in Morocco: maybe it's just closer than Afghanistan, where Huston had gone ten years ago to scout locations. But I've seen documentaries on Tibet, and these Moroccans, with their heads shorn, certainly look like Buddhist monks. The trouble begins when their hair begins to grow, which sometimes happens in the course of a single day. An infinity of barbers have set up shop along the edges of the set. It could be Al Rashid's Baghdad as seen by Korda; but it's just part of the production's make-up department.

Not many of the people on the set seem to have had much contact with the land of which they are guests. Michael Caine is a notable exception, and we talk between takes, sweltering in his caravan. In the Cockney accent he is proud of not losing he explains why he wanted to make this film: it's his chance to make what he calls a 'real movie-movie', in the tradition of *Gunga Din*, *Beau Geste* and all that lot. And after having been in a few movies that were like movies were *gonna* be, he wanted to be in a movie that was like movies *used* to be. Also the *Boom Town* Gable-Tracy friendship and the *O.K. Corral* Douglas-Lancaster teaming attracts him; he believes in the male couple. But he's got this personal thing, which really made him accept the role, this British working class thing, to tell people that if they really want to do something, then go and do it. This Kipling story is about two guys who dared. In his youth, Caine's own people had said to him, 'Who do you think you are, trying to be an actor?' He wants to show people that they can do it, too.

This is his 29th movie in eleven years, he knows something about movies, he'd like to see some unknowns get a chance. He wants to burn all tripods, and likes tracking, panning, and especially tilting the camera up and down. Direction should consist of making what's inside the frame interesting, the time of camera angles and all that is past now. He likes Forbes, Furie, Hyams, Hodges, Mankiewicz, Losey and Huston, owns their films and projects them at home at weekends. He doesn't plan to do any more theatre, since he prefers the greater concentration in spurts that movies require, where he can't say 'I'll get it right tomorrow night.' Not having planned to interview him, I leave the caravan reluctantly, almost as if I was leaving him there lonely with his goodwill. His personal message, he says in parting, isn't in the films he makes, it's in the ones he refuses: the ones about violence and discrimination.

On the set between takes, with his secretary typing away at a camp table, Sean Connery holds a meagre court. He's seen some Moroccan movies, or anyway movies shown in local cinemas, and relates the non-sequiturs of the plots. Huston is there, it's my first sight of him in ten years and he hasn't changed, looking, if anything, younger than Noah, but who wouldn't? An old man from the nearby village had had the opportunity to see a film, but hadn't availed himself of it because, as he had told Huston, he was sure it was going to be noisy. Connery agrees, not only do people talk all the time, but the film jumps all the time. And people talk to the screen. In a film he'd seen, there was a James Bond type of character, a local with an Irish wig, like a black rag nailed to his head; and this big fight scene was shot by having the guy crouch and all the villains were laid across him. The camera zoomed in fast and the guy went OOOah!, throwing the seven guys in the air to the accompaniment of a lot of punch noises on the track. For no particular reason, scenes of various women walking down a garden path in slit robes and singing, were intercut with these fights. Someone had told Connery that these were samples of cultural exchange films with Egypt.

Some shooting is actually about to take place. Between the narrow footpath and the city on its plateau in the background, hundreds of extras mill. Three cameras will record the attempt of Caine and Connery to get the mules to go a bit faster than mules usually do. 'Stones' made up of Styrofoam, painted brown and centre-weighted with pebbles, are handed out to the crowd to be thrown at the fleeing couple, who are to retaliate with shots from their flint muskets. Bob Simmons, the stunt organiser, has a glint in his eye: maybe the stones and the shots will have some effect on the mules, which Huston thought would be more authentic than horses. He's had to train them for the past weeks, trying to teach them to gallop, which the mules refused. He thinks it's all a matter of heredity: since mules don't reproduce, they can't be taught. I don't get a chance to challenge this Lamarckian heresy, since the mules proceed to prove it.

Shooting with three cameras simultaneously is Oswald Morris' idea. Morris has made seven films with Huston, including the ones on which Huston used a special type of colour photography: *Moby Dick* and *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. I can see this is run-in teamwork; there is agreement over focal lengths, angles, rhythms. Huston doesn't interfere with the lighting, which despite the fact that we're outdoors is considerable, mostly blue 5500° fill-ins. The three cameras are used to help in the cutting; many scenes can't really be repeated, and evidently Huston can't tell if the emotional impact of a certain scene will require close-up or long-shot in the context of the dramatic build-up. The scene requires considerable logistics, and it won't be in the can tonight. As the sun proceeds towards the horizon, colour temperatures change and the set gets cool in the evening breeze. There is no feeling of rush, no guilts are distributed. The scene will be shot tomorrow. I see Huston depart in his Range Rover; we will talk tomorrow.

March 20

Miraculously, by the time I arrive on the set the scene has been shot. Since Huston shoots pretty much chronologically, the next one is similar. It's just a few steps further along the track, but now the mules are to topple into the ravine, scattering Alexander's treasure, which Caine and Connery will finally use as handy ammunition to throw back at their pursuers. Handy ammunition, handy metaphor.

Huston had been right about the mules: they are so authentic they won't topple. Again and again the scene is shot, the path is made narrower and narrower, but even across a slim ridge a few inches wide they pass safely. Since this is a scene involving all those extras who are in hot pursuit, and since the track is too narrow to turn around in, each failure means an hour of resetting. From time to time, the mules are exchanged; Michael seems to think that the dark one with the tuft of hair at the crop is more nervous, maybe he could be scared more easily. Connery suggests hot potatoes under the tail; the system is not applied. Hours pass as a trap-door is built into the mountainside. It becomes a game; I'm rooting for the mules. The sun, now perpendicular, penetrates to my scalp. Every mulish attempt raises more dust. There must now be 2,000 people breathing it, sweltering, screaming lines or curses. But Huston, in a blue jean suit and a visor cap, a white dust mask slung around his neck, remains totally above it all, unruffled by the melée about him, patient, accommodating to the journalists, kind to his assistants, decisive with the technicians.

Gladys Hill is with Huston practically the whole time. She has collaborated with him on many of his scripts, including this one. Since Huston began as a writer, he likes to trade scenes back and forth, trying them out in the scripting stage. He recalls reading this particular story at the age of 12 or 13, and the film is based on those first impressions of it that he remembers. Huston is now 68, which makes 55 years of memory. With Kipling, he says, he feels an affinity that is based on the universality of the writer's quest, he identifies with his attempt to defend the basic human values in the struggle for survival and excellence. I suddenly remember talking to Huston, soon after we met that first time, about Robert Flaherty, whom he considered a friend in his time, and about that formidable man's lonely quest for the same ideals. And the triangle closes: Flaherty had of course tried to shoot *The Jungle Book*, had discovered Sabu, had tried to stay with the spirit of the author, only to have the film taken away from him, midway, by Alexander Korda, who didn't find that spirit a saleable commercial property. The times must have changed, or Huston must have found a formula, because obviously what he is trying to do is complete Flaherty's road, not Korda's. Whether he will do it is another question.

Huston is aware of the basic problems that all literary transfers involve. To avoid literalness, he tries to penetrate to the fundamental ideas and then work with those ideas in cinematic terms. But in the case of this particular film he has only elaborated, not made basic changes as he did in *Moby Dick*, for example, where the work was restructured to bring out the blasphemy, the shaking of the fist at God. Obviously this is interpretation, not transposition, but he is not afraid of interpreting, knowing it cannot be avoided, although he doesn't

consciously seek it. What he tries to do, both in researching a story and in writing his version for the screen, is to let his interpretation follow the original sense. Hence mules, I surmise.

Does he want to keep himself out of it, I ask, despite the fact that he accepts interpretation? It turns out that he does, but 'I try to perceive, and then to demonstrate what there already is.' We talk about how he writes, scripting in detail but then leaving himself open to improvisation, 'within the bounds of the controllable.' He writes from the imagination, tries to find actors and landscapes to fit it, but then adjusts to what he finds. He has delayed films—in this case for twenty years—because his imagination was stronger than the realities that offered themselves. He attributes it to luck that he's never had to adjust too much, that his imagination has almost always found a physical expression in an actor, in a landscape, in a colour.

When I say that he doesn't seem to instruct the actors much, imagining that he had done this before I arrived, he surprisingly answers that he doesn't try to. 'The more one directs, the more there is a tendency to monotony. If one is telling each person what to do, one ends up with a lot of little replicas of oneself. I always let the actor show me how he imagines the scene himself. In fact, I let the whole thing work on me, show me. The actors, the set, the location, the sounds, the animals. The animals have a great advantage over actors: they know exactly what they want to do, no self-doubts, no hesitations. You must know how to watch. I have already learned a lot from these mules.'

Since film directors so rarely seem to be able to put into words what they expect of actors, I goad him on, suggesting that he prefers a man who remains himself to one who can act the part of another. He agrees and doesn't, stating that he prefers a man whose personality lends itself to a written role to one who simulates illusions, but prefers good actors over correct personalities. 'I do not like to see the mechanics of acting. A fine actor should control his performance. What's important is the shading he can give a line, his timing, his relationship to and knowledge of the camera. He must have an awareness of the size of his gesture, his motion, in relation to the size that his image will be on the screen. It's instinctual in a screen actor, not frequent in one from the stage.

'In this film I treat a subject that is very close to film-making: the cinema has a tendency to blow everything up out of proportion, just like the self-aggrandisement practised by these protagonists. The danger is not only for actors, who can fall in love with their image, but also for directors, who can easily let the camera take over. I suppose the other dangers, those of thinking one is more than one is, of falling in love with one's image, exist for directors as well, although I've never preferred mine to a work of mine. The important thing is not your great ability, but the idea you are trying to express. I don't make pictures for myself.' Since he says he has learned a lot from the mules, I am wondering if it's patience or stubbornness. Over by the precipice, the trap-door has been rigged again, and another attempt at mule-toppling

Huston pitching. Photograph by Gideon Bachmann

is afoot. Again, a futile one. Reacting, and answering me at the same time, Huston says: 'They are so wise!'

It is hard to judge, from these jumbled doings, if what I watch is typical for Huston. On the plateau, he has laid a track, and some of the pursuing monks are shot with the travelling camera. There doesn't seem to be a stylistic base of great particularity. The camera positions are chosen functionally, with few high or low angles; except that one of the three cameras trained on the mule track is set low, and one in birds' perspective, not to make the mules appear either heroic or insignificant, but just to make sure that the scene, once it works, will have been covered from all sides. Caine and Connery are indeed given the chance Huston described; he lets them do each scene as they see fit, and intervenes only later, suggestingly, never with vehemence. In fact, the only time he gets any steam up at all is when he finds the monks slack in the styrofoam-stone throwing scene: he picks up the objects himself and hurls them, his long arms flailing, into the wind. Cervantes would have enjoyed this knight of the happy countenance, building his visual windmills on these Berber slopes.

In the afternoon, the cool catches up with us again, the shadows reach slowly into the camera's sunshade, and the mules haven't toppled. But everyone seems contented. It may all be Morocco, but with another director the magic might perhaps have given way to the harassed needs of practicality. I realise that this calm had also pervaded the belly of Noah's Ark, despite its impossible logistics. And I finally decide that I understand why Huston shoots in Morocco. They seem made for each other. Of course, filming may take a little longer.

March 21

Friday is the rest day for Moslems, but are mules Moslems? With great energy the crew attacks the day's chore, indistinguishable from yesterday's. The ever-new miracle of the mountainside that resets itself at zero like a film running backwards, with the trap-door, a good thirty feet long and six feet wide, rising like a phoenix from its perennial destruction, has been re-wrought.

Huston is free again between topples. We talk about Kipling and Ireland, about horses and other animals, about the personalities of trees and the character of landscapes. And about movie audiences. Many things in the medium, Huston says, work for the director: the whole immediacy of the experience, the subjectivity of the emotions that can derive from a good film, the identification that results when the screen reflects what the viewer *wants* to see.

He believes that every element of film-making has a physiological counterpart in the audio-visual perception system of the human being, and that it is the understanding of these mechanisms and their skilful orchestration that keeps films from becoming tedious, and which causes him to vote strenuously against cerebral, formal effects that have no roots in our habitual physiology. This is not to say, he insists, that films should be naturalistic, because style, after all, is the creator's personal honesty made visible.

His examples are convincing: the cut corresponds to a fast movement of the head during which (and I try; he is right) most people close their eyes briefly. The dissolve, he says, is the change of thoughts, that moment of impingement of ideas and images, when one looks at something outside the direct field of vision. And the fade-out corresponds to sleep. An opportunity to rest, to change completely. Just as he uses it in film. All that helps him in doing that which he likes most: the editing of the film in the camera. He has had a moviola brought to Marrakesh, and sees his rushes as soon as they arrive, by air, from London. The film is taking shape, in rough form, as he shoots. 'There is really only one way to cut the film. It's just a matter of choosing the best takes. And everything must serve the idea; I can't say that often enough. Clarity and a minimum of means. So I guess my first principle is to understand myself, and then to find the simplest way to make others understand it, too.'

This afternoon the mules go. Two of them, not very spectacularly, suddenly sit down as the trap collapses, and slither down the steep incline, with brass pots and fake Greek coins scattering everywhere. Twenty yards down they come to rest against a pine stump, unharmed. Everybody cheers wildly, the special effects men climb down with ropes to help the animals up, but they, still wobbly on legs that seem more surprised at their failure than we are at our success, quickly rise and scuttle up by themselves. It is a terrible anti-climax, but it makes everybody happy. With each failed attempt the group of mule supporters had grown. Even some of the hardy Arabs seem touched; anyway, they can cycle home now.

We raise dust driving away. Looking back, I think Huston would have liked that shot, a natural dissolve as the cardboard buildings disappear in the red cloud. A change of thought, of place, of time, as he might have done it in film. Already, back on the road, it is like coming out of the cinema. Huston and the film are one, are memory, judgment coagulated in a moment of time. I shall not, I hope, write an objective report. ■

FILM SCHOOLS: ACTIVE and PASSIVE

Nicholas Broomfield's 'Behind the Rent Strike'; Roger Deakins' 'Farmers' Hunt'

David Robinson

We may not have much left in the way of a film industry in Britain, but we do have two major film schools (establishments, that is, whose sole purpose is to train potential recruits to movie-making), which between them launch something like sixty graduates each year into a cold, hard world in which the chances of appropriate employment are slim.

Both schools, as it happened, reached a critical moment in their careers during 1974. The National Film School completed its first three years, graduated its first intake, and exposed some of its results in the form of twenty hours of film shown to the public at the National Film Theatre. At the same time the country's oldest surviving school, the London Film School, went into liquidation and (to oppose the metaphors somewhat) produced a phoenix from the ashes in the form of the London International Film School.

The London Film School had begun life as the London School of Film Technique in 1957, offering six-month courses for 110 guineas, in bizarre premises in Electric Avenue, Brixton. In January 1964 the School moved to 90b Charlotte Street and extended its courses to 33 weeks. By the end of the following year, it had moved again, to the former Drury Lane scenic workshops (long since converted to use as a warehouse) in Shelton Street, Covent Garden, and instituted a two-year Diploma course. In autumn 1969, about the time that the Government announced its acceptance of the recommendations of the Lloyd Committee's Report, the name was changed to the London Film School. Throughout this time, and including the period of student militancy that was inevitable around 1968, the school was skilfully guided by Robert Dunbar, its Principal and also Chairman of Governors.

When the Government set up a Committee under Lord Lloyd of Hampstead to examine the state of film training in Great Britain and to determine whether or not a national film school should be created, the London Film School did not conceal its optimism that, having struggled for over a decade on its own resources, it might now be made the basis of a future national film school. The hope was dashed even before the Committee reported; there were unequivocal leaks to the effect that the London Film School had no more chance than a snowball in hell. There seemed no very evident reason for this stand. The school had built up an international reputation; its selection of students was made from huge lists of applicants; and a major part of the annual places went to students from overseas. Some very distinguished names in the British film industry were numbered among the regular or occasional teaching staff. At any international confrontation of student work, the productions of the school invariably stood up well for their scope and originality. The reasoning of the Lloyd Committee on this matter will perhaps never be known. It may be that the Committee felt that any new institution should start with an entirely clear slate; and in any case officialdom likes to make its own appointments and not be faced with *faits accomplis*. Perhaps too the School, which had received no official support (except indirectly through grants towards student fees), was tainted as 'commercial'.

Some people feel that this disappointment struck a blow at the morale of the London Film School which perhaps started its troubles; though other reasons for the problems that became acute in the 1970s were a combination of the general economic situation and, possibly, over-expansion in the school, with an administration that had not sufficiently adapted as the number of students had grown to well over 200. Inflation and the oil crisis brought things to

a head. By June 1974 it was learned that the school must go into liquidation.

The staff and students resolutely refused to let the school die, and at once elected a committee of management. Staff continued to work, though no one was paid after June 8th; and the students raised a hardship fund to aid staff members. Students and staff attended the winding-up meeting, in their capacity as creditors, and immediately after it set up a working party to establish a new school in which to continue their work. A school, with an *ad hoc* working curriculum, was actually in operation the next day, in premises lent by the Covent Garden Meeting Place. During the next six months the school moved from one lot of borrowed premises to another; staff gave their services voluntarily; students manned offices, helped with administration and worked on fund-raising activities (one of the first of which was a benefit première of *Le Petit Théâtre de Jean Renoir* at the Paris-Pullman).

The initial need was for money to buy the assets and equipment of the old school, and by February 1975 the necessary £5,000 had been raised. Finally negotiations to take over the lease of the purpose-adapted Shelton Street premises were successfully completed, though at a price. In the interim the head lease had passed from a private trader to the Covent Garden Market Authority, and the rent was raised from £2,000 per annum to £9,500 per annum rising to £15,000 in 1979–80—a startling slice out of the school's annual budget.

The economics of these two British film schools are in striking contrast. Apart from the exceptional donations received during this crisis period, the London International Film School's only source of income is its student fees. These at present stand at £240 a term, though they are to be raised to £270. With the present 108 students, the higher figure would give a total annual income of about £83,000; and to operate successfully the school would like to bring its students up to the 240 which the old school had at the start of 1974. This compares with an annual budget for the National Film School, with only 75 students, of well over £450,000. Fees, at only £400 per annum, account for some £30,000 of this; the rest is contributed in the ratio of 60 per cent from the Department of Education and Science, 26 per cent from the film industry, through the Eady Fund, and not more than 7 per cent from television. The only thing more expensive than teaching film, they say at the National Film School, is teaching people to pilot Jumbo Jets.

The N.F.S.'s premises belong to them. Perpetually designated by the terms of an old will to the purposes of film production, Beaconsfield Studios were bought for the film school with a loan from Rank, the mortgage on which is paid off out of the annual budget. Old, rambling, a muddle of years of adaptation, with considerable burdens of maintenance, the National's premises nevertheless look like a much better economy than the London International's rented brick barracks.

Inevitably the economic difference shows in equipment. The National is as well equipped as could be hoped, certainly for 16 mm, on which most of the work seems to be done, with a basis of one 16 mm facility to five students. At the London International they have to hire a good deal of the equipment they need, and are grateful for hand-me-downs from the industry to supplement what they have been able to afford. In the projection theatre there are as many collapsed seats as whole ones; the dimmer in the studio is upwards of thirty years old. On the one hand such a situation can be inhibiting; on the other it is axiomatic that a limited degree of starvation in the way of equipment and materials can extend a student. Maintenance of equipment is a very serious business at the London International; and they boast that a student is a lot better equipped going into the industry (should he be so lucky) trained like this, than accustomed to facilities of a standard he may never meet again in professional conditions. Certainly there is no better technical exercise than to have to learn to light a set with two floods. By the same token, of course, limitations of material can get to be a strain and a frustration.

There is, of course, no way of learning better than doing: the vital part of the work of any film school is not reading and lectures or even looking at films, but actual production. Here again, though, there's heart to be taken from the recollection that the most critical period of Lev Kuleshov's work in training the film-makers who were to create the classic Soviet cinema was at a time when film stock was totally unavailable, and they learned their craft in making 'films without film', exercises done with imaginary facilities. The British schools are not yet down (or up) to that; though again the National is obviously able to offer its students very much more opportunity. Each student is allotted his own production budget, something like £700 for his first two years, and £1,000 in the third. Given the capital facilities of equipment and technical assistance available to him, this is worth probably three or four times more than it would be to a film-maker working independently outside the school, and is reckoned adequate to make a half-hour film on 16 mm, with colour and sound. Moreover students can if they wish form production partnerships on bigger projects or (on the example of Skolimowski's *Rysopis*, made in sections as student exercises at the Lodz school) combine their own individual budgets to make a long film. Already one student of the school's first course, Guido van de Vijvere, has made a feature film, *Pulling Through*.

A certain danger has already become apparent in this allocation of individual budgets, in that given responsibility for using a substantial sum the student tends to become 'product conscious'. The overall impression of the first graduation works was of good, sound, finished films, executed safely within the students' acquired capabilities and experience, without the risk or over-straining that might be looked for in student work. At the London International, they have less to chance and less to lose. Clearly it is premature to guess what sort of work will emerge from the newly formed school. From its predecessor one recalls with affection a bulk of half-realised exercises and moments of highflying into idiocy or anarchy or brilliance, like *Breakfast*, that beautifully accomplished joke about a moon expedition that is mistaken for a fried egg and gobbled up by a lunar giantess in a tent-like frock.

Even more apparent than the economic differences between the two schools, however, is the opposition of their teaching philosophy. Professor Colin Young, a Scot who returned to head the National Film School after years of experience in film teaching and media research in the United States, summarised the principles on which the school's first three years have been based, in a paper presented to last summer's Tokyo Congress of CILECT (Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinéma et de Télévision).

'For various reasons the School has utilised an active as opposed to a passive curriculum. A *passive curriculum* can be defined as one which closely structures all or a major proportion of a student's time in large blocks—usually a year at a time or over the entire course. A curriculum will be considered passive even if it is periodically up-dated to meet new needs.

'A curriculum will be considered *active* if it is intended to respond constantly to individual student needs, even if this response results in providing some students some of the time with structured learning opportunities. . . It is obviously very much easier to describe the objectives and strategies of a passive curriculum if only because you can point at it—it is written down in a catalogue. So it is not for reasons of simplicity that a school will adopt an active curriculum approach.'

The reasons, he continued, were 'a general pedagogical preference for creating a school whose curriculum will be learning-based rather than teaching-based'—bearing in mind that the average age of students is 26, most of them graduates and the rest with professional experience; 'an assumption that the uses made of the School will necessarily be pluralist'—or, as they have expressed it elsewhere, '75 film schools for 75 students'; and 'an assumption that many graduates will wish to be in a position to create their own professional futures, so that the curriculum must enable and support the development of individual or group initiative.'

Professor Young summarises some of the arguments that might be raised against the active curriculum: students trained or educated in highly structured schools may not be able to take advantage of a different system of education; students with different levels of professional experience cannot be expected to share equally in the advantages of an open curriculum since they will be unequally aware of their post-graduate or professional options; 'the system proposed (could be) simply a disguised way of perpetuating teacher and administrator control, since they will be the only ones with an adequate bank of information about resources and student needs'; an active curriculum will not prepare students to work in a tightly structured professional situation.

In practical terms, 'the school has evolved into its present situation in which students can spend their time in any of five different ways:

'a) engaged in "technical" or "conceptual" training in a workshop as part of a group, or alone

'b) engaged in screenings, discussions, lectures or seminars (not related to specific production activity) either at the School or elsewhere
'c) engaged in a personal or group production (including writing)
'd) engaged as a member of a crew on such a production
'e) on attachment to a professional production or company.'

Finally Professor Young's paper summarises the National Film School's three-year course: 'In year one the student is encouraged (*sic*) to gain a basic grounding in all aspects of film-making. We have always provided a structured approach to this year and have revised it with each new intake. During the second year of the course the student explores the alternative areas of specialisation that seem appropriate to him, and in the final year concentrates on the area or areas in which he hopes to find employment. At the point of entry into the School we have a provisional understanding of the individual's objectives but leave open the possibility that the experience gained over the three years will lead to a change in those ambitions.' In other words, the National Film School leaves all its options open all the time.

By Professor Young's terms of reference, the curriculum at the London International Film School, largely taken over from its predecessor, is strictly 'passive'. Students are not only *encouraged*; the prospectus at all points makes it clear that they are *required* to gain their groundings. With a two-year course as against the National's three years, the curriculum is concentrated and precisely structured throughout the whole six terms.

The entry requirements are quite severe (as they are, of course, at the National also). Candidates resident overseas must be graduates of a recognised university or equivalent; U.K. candidates (who make up a minority of the students) must have a degree from a recognised university, or five 'O'-level and two 'A'-level subjects, or equivalent, or diplomas from recognised Art or Technical Schools. They are also required to submit a short film 'consisting of about 20 to 30 shots', and examples of film, photographic, art or literary work.

'Specialists are . . . necessary, but we do not accept students as "editors", "directors" or "cameramen". We feel that in any case the physical manipulation of cameras, recording apparatus, lighting equipment and editing machinery is relatively simple; with practice most people can soon become mechanically adept and those who are content to remain nothing more than narrow specialists would do as well to learn by apprenticeship. . . Our Diploma Course is therefore designed to give all students a wide knowledge of all aspects of film-making, encouraging them to learn not only how but why a job should be done—where it fits into the film as a whole. This comprehensive outlook—and the experience of cooperating with others—is encouraged by concentration on the practical work of actual productions, together with all the wider considerations which—although not merely "academic"—are vital to the development of workers in the field of communications.'

Each day from the beginning to the end of the course is precisely scheduled, though

'Horse-Boy': rehearsal on a Swiss location

naturally 'once students are launched on any of their film exercises they are encouraged to concentrate on the job and are not interrupted by lecture sessions.' It is made clear that 'students may also be required to attend evening lectures. . . Scripting and other preparatory work is done in the student's spare time. . .'

The syllabus is broken down into some twenty blocks, from 'Basic Principles', 'Scripting and Planning', 'Organisation and Production' to 'Lenses', 'Camera', 'Lighting and Special Effects' and 'Editing'. It is significant perhaps that 'Film History' and 'Film Analysis and Appreciation' appear on the syllabus as blocks Q and R, following 'P: Miscellaneous'. This seems to confirm a general sense that—at least by comparison with Eastern European film schools, which in any event have more time at their disposal—the British schools assume ('encourage' perhaps) rather than positively direct the general and cinematic cultural background against which the student is training. Film education is perhaps still essentially oriented towards technical aspects and actual production. Subjects like 'Film History' are seen as marginal and ancillary studies rather than as essential, the access to the accumulated bank of communal experience, which could save the student the need to rediscover what has already been discovered before; and could perhaps save *us* from some of the familiar film school patterns of 8 mm Godard, New Cut impressionism, expressionist psycho-sexual autobiography, and perhaps such pretensions as John Lind's much-shown National Film School work *The Reprieve*, a fragment of pseudo-Jancsó, inappropriately dedicated to Tarkovsky.

It is interesting that ultimately many students seem to feel happier and more secure with the more structured 'passive' method. There are signs that the National Film School's apparent inclination to move towards slightly more structured curricula —despite the nervous fears of the faculty that it symptomises a 'hardening of the arteries'—is in response to a clearly expressed preference on the part of the student for something that looks at least rather more tangibly like formal 'training'.

Of course it is one thing to see it all written down neatly on paper, and another to see it in the untidiness of operation. A film school is a very hard place to know; so little of the important things are visible on the day to day surface. All over the world film schools look remarkably the same: bleak, messy corridors; notice boards with last term's announcements; form movie posters; piles of film cans coming and going or perhaps just beached; abandoned props; cutting room doors sheltering solitary figures crouched over Steenbecks or Movieolas conjuring mysterious montages; most of the people somewhere else and those that are still there looking proud and distant (which is only because their minds are on their productions: the one outstanding characteristic of film schools everywhere is the concentration they breed) or lolling with the *Financial Times* or the *Mirror* in the school canteen (the National's is much better, of course; the school had the good luck that the Gas Board had the place before them). If you do get to talk to the students they are kind and patient, endlessly admiring of their contemporaries and tolerantly loyal to the school (though *maybe* you could get a National student to sigh that things might be more structured; and a London International student to wish they were slightly less so).

Productions reveal more. I have already noted that the overall impression of the first group of National Film School graduation films was their technical quality and solidity. Even a film of such high technical ambitions and philosophical pretensions as Dennis Lowe's *Temptae* ('a view of the interrelationships between Man and God as visualised through the myths that surround creation') has a throwaway assurance in its technical execution. Ultimately you realise that what you are missing is risk, folly, over-reaching of capabilities. There is certainly an awareness of this in the school itself. Perhaps, they suggest, younger students would bring the missing quality. When you are seventeen you have not much to lose; but graduates in law and sociology, 25 to 35 years old, have lost the urge to lose their shirts. Perhaps the personal budgets account for a certain product-consciousness. Perhaps the 'active' curriculum gives students too great a sense of responsibility; perhaps you need traces simply so that you have something to kick over.

One shortcoming of which the school is acutely conscious is the problem of developing work with actors. Roger Crittenden, the National's Deputy Head, says that it was the difficulties experienced in this area which first developed the workshop activity of the school, the practice of bringing in outside experts to work with small groups of students on individual problems. 'Performance was the first clearly identified problem. People who wanted to work on fiction found working with actors a big hurdle. So for these we brought in outside tutors who could devote themselves to intensive work on the subject. From that original workshop on performance we have grown to arrange them for things like lighting and documentary.

'The particular difficulty in this field is the problem of establishing cooperation with theatre schools, whose curriculum is usually very tightly structured, and in any case includes little if any consideration of acting for the screen. Mountview, a school with a rather less tight syllabus, has been the most cooperative.' The ideal, of course, would be for the school to have its own actor department. As it is, students generally use professional actors in their school productions. Despite the reservations and regrets of the

school, however, such work with actors as actually emerges appears to be of a high order. Malcolm Mowbray's second-year film, *Trombone*, is no more ambitious than a sketch for a short tele-play; but, admirably written, it is a marvellously precise acting duologue. And for all its pretensions, Alan Mainwaring's *In Celebration* ('a Pirandellian evocation of a writer's sexual hang-ups') has a skilfully deployed acting ensemble.

In fact, not more than about one-fifth of the school's films seem to be the sort of late adolescent, auto-psychological/sexual/political introspections that most students have somehow or other to get out of their systems. A tiny handful are politico-fiction projections (James Barraclough's *It May Not Happen*; Jeff Perks' *The Captives*; Jonathan Lewis' *Point Three Recurring*), or media spoofs. Jonathan Lewis' *Horse-Boy* is a parody of the television series *Ski Boy* and quite a funny pastiche of the slick techniques and *ersatz* sentiment of TV series drama, even with its own built-in commercial breaks. As an exercise it is interesting, since the students set themselves the special strategic and technical problems of shooting a film abroad (in Switzerland) with non-English speaking actors. It also arouses teasing speculation on whether the film-makers were exorcising their fears that they too might fall into this kind of film-making; or advertising their skill in doing so. One or two students are working out their absorption in particular historical moments: John Lind with revolution-period Russia (*The Reprieve, Matushka*); Brian Huberman with *The Alamo*.

Something like fifty per cent of the school's film output, however, consists of strict and traditional social or sociological documentary. To an extent this may reflect the economics of school film-making: technical time and equipment are cheaper and more readily available than the production materials for fiction films. It may equally to some extent reflect the orientation of the people running the school. Colin Young himself is fascinated with the problems of sociological and ethnographic documentary and the effect of the camera upon the subject being filmed. If there is such an influence, it need not be directly through the teaching or guidance offered in the school, but through the selection of students. Obviously the successful applicants will be those whose approach most interests the selection board.

There is a range of approach within this documentary area, and some personalities emerge strongly. Nicholas Broomfield reveals a Wiseman-like patience and nerve in waiting out the telling moment; and in *Behind the Rent Strike* comes up with such a classic documentary revelation as the scene of the policeman lecturing to school children. As he warms to his subject, the lecturer becomes alarming, terrifying the kids with his exultant boast that he can already pick out the ones he's going to get inside the station; and the scene vividly exposes some of the hang-ups of police psychology. Ben Lewin has a quick and unpatronising sense of the quirks and comedies of people, which lifts his work above the ordinary level of television *vérité*. His *Dear Mr. Barber, I Want to Swim the Channel* is not the first or last film about a Channel attempt; but the efforts and eventual failure of a 13-year-old aspirant and the pathetic optimism of the Channel-swimming 'industry' become a melancholy comedy with even a hint of Olmi, as the little enterprise struggles garrulously from folly to folly. His *Don Quixote in London* too includes such sad farces as the willing subjection to exploitation of a housewife's agency-selling party.

The situation of school film production can offer a luxury of time such as few professional film-makers can indulge; and result in something like *Farmers' Hunt*, made by Roger Deakins in his second year. It describes a hunt without any social ambitions, but which is simply the spare-time pleasure of small farmers and villagers. The leisure and the detached affection of the observation, with the sensational yet unobtrusive colour photography, gives the film a rare quality as anthropological document. The scenes of the rites of dismembering the stag are a record of a disappearing community comparable with *Nanook*.

In the Eastern world, a graduate leaving the film schools of Moscow, Lodz or Budapest almost automatically finds work appropriate to his level and specialism in professional film studios. What happens to graduates of film schools in Britain, where the film industry has a less firm footing? At the London International they don't really know. (They have now started a society of former students and others which will serve the dual purpose of organising support for the school, and also maintaining contact with old students. One of the Old Boys is Bill Douglas, another is Mike Leigh. And so on.) A number of the foreign students who have passed through the school are thought to be working in administrative posts back in their own countries. The expectation that this will in fact be the fate and fortune of many students justifies the emphasis on the broad general background which the school supplies rather than strictly specialist disciplines. (This is a basic difference from the Eastern schools, which from a very early stage have quite distinct faculties for directors, writers, cameramen, editors, actors and so on.)

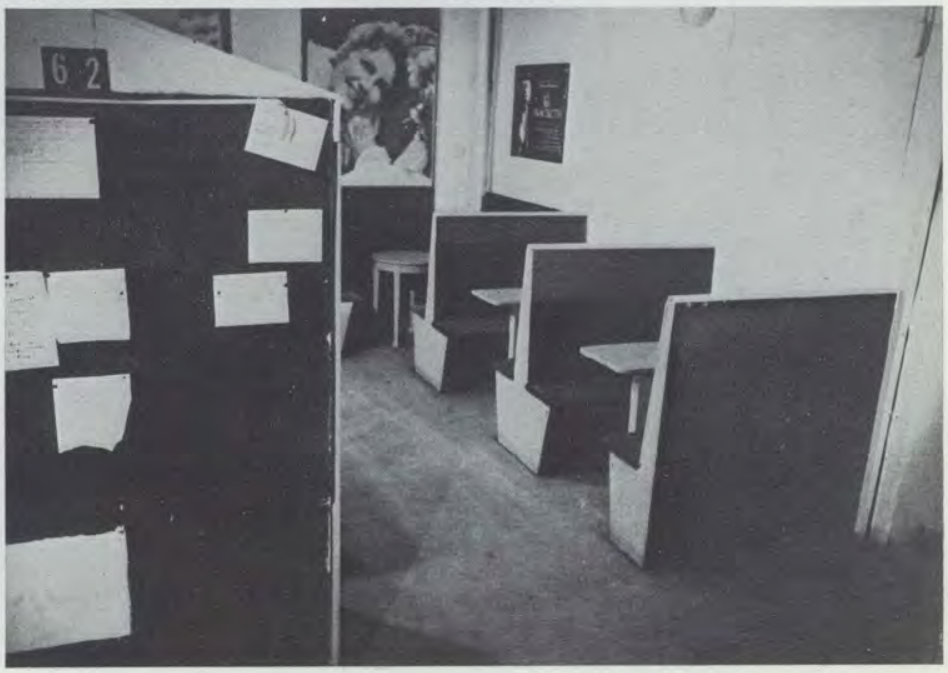
Since the first National Film School intake graduated only a few months ago, few of them are in any way permanently settled. Several remain around the school, finishing projects or contemplating new ones. Most of those who have found something definite to do, even though temporarily, have been attracted to television. Nicholas Broomfield has films to make for Granada and for the BFI Production Board. Alan Mainwaring has been making a documentary for Harlech Television. Christopher King is doing a remake of his school film, *The Healing*, for the BBC. Stephen Morrison is producing for 'World in Action'. Ben Lewin is working for 'Nationwide'.

A couple have settled for administrative jobs; Robert Caldicott is Films Officer for Belfast. The rest are mostly still exploring. John Lind is writing a feature film. Brian Huberman is working as an assistant editor while trying to set up a feature in collaboration with Jonathan Lewis.

None of them seems very optimistic—at this end of the 3-year course—about finding a place in the film industry in present circumstances; and television, except for those who can offer some quite exceptional directorial or writing talent, is not all that much more hopeful. One student spoke of the dispiriting discovery that assistant editors in the BBC have stayed assistants for five years and more without hope of promotion, so completely staffed are the film production departments, and with so little immediate possibility of expansion.

The schools can offer a lot. If they 'can't teach talent', in the words of the father of all film teachers, Lev Kuleshov, they can provide the best conditions for talent to develop and mature, they can generate a favourable atmosphere and mutual encouragement and stimulation to help the artist overcome purely mechanical and organisational problems. But they *can't* find him a job. With the shrinking picture industry we have, they are likely for a while at least to be in the traditional situation of schools of dance which train teachers to teach in schools of dance. ■

'All film schools look the same. . .': the London International



Charles Wolfe

Resurrecting GREED

'But it is most of all Stroheim who rejects photographic expressionism and the tricks of montage. In his films reality lays itself bare like a suspect confessing under the relentless examination of the commissioner of police.' —André Bazin, 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema'

Fifty years after its creation, *Greed* lies lodged in film textbooks as a masterpiece of cinematic realism. This aesthetic notion of realism, however, is closely bound up with the film's history. Eric von Stroheim is the grand martyr of Hollywood cinema, and *Greed* is his greatest testament to flagrant directorial imperative. Unfortunately, abuse of his films, to which extant prints of *Greed* amply testify, has been used as a measure of Stroheim's access to and revelation of 'truth'. Historical facts and rumours become the groundwork for critical analysis. Herman J. Weinberg, for example, in introducing the first skeletal collection of stills from the felled giant (*The Complete Greed*), glides easily from documenting Stroheim's collision with moneymen and obsession with authenticity to a critical assertion that *Greed's* 'greatness is in the merciless truth revealed by the translucent crystal of Stroheim's lens, by the inescapable thought it engenders.' Bolstered by a Proustian epigram on truth ('We must never be afraid to go too far, for the truth lies beyond'), the critique becomes lost in a latticework of moralising and sentimentality, qualities perhaps appropriate to a discussion of Stroheim and Hollywood, but not necessarily to what is revealed by Stroheim's lens, translucent or otherwise.

Weinberg, however, is working out of a long-standing tradition. Stories about Stroheim have often substituted for study of his work, a situation not surprising considering the liveliness of the anecdotes and the unavailability of full versions of the films. It is somehow fitting that Weinberg, while admirably providing us with our first peek at amputated sequences of *Greed*, precedes the text with studio stills of production activity. The making and breaking of *Greed* is absorbing. Historians trace Stroheim's classic clash with Irving Thalberg and the newly formed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Cameraman William Daniels documents the 'realities' of shooting on location. Jean Hersholt, in hospital several months after his brawl with Gibson Gowland in the sun-baked dust of Death Valley, describes in detail how the master 'dragged every bit of

Images of greed and secrecy. ZaSu Pitts in one of the cut scenes

realism out of us.' Suffering somehow purifies the product.

While living, Stroheim fed the fires of his public image-making. Off-screen his professional and artistic intransigence, his paraded egocentricity and justified bitterness, were instantly legendary. Stroheim's certain affinity for Frank Norris's self-expressed integrity in *McTeague*, for example, is appropriately transposed into a proud, if not flamboyant, introduction to his film version: 'I never truckled; I never took off the hat to Fashion and held it out for pennies. By God, I told them the truth. They liked it or they didn't like it. What had that to do with me? I told them the truth. I knew it for the truth then and I know it for the truth now.'

On-screen, however, Stroheim's iconography lingers as the ruthless, monocled Prussian officer, the man—in public relations phraseology—we love to hate. It is precisely this compound of images—uncompromising artist and distasteful authoritarian—which makes Bazin's above-cited analogy to a 'commissioner' shimmer with metaphorical aptness. Stroheim's *persona* assures us that the world, stripped naked, will confess before this relentless examiner.

Yet the point works both ways. To what extent does the examiner affect the confession? How does the nature of his questioning colour the subject's response? It is this 'colouring' of the perceived image with which all film criticism must deal. But the film itself is neglected when discussion is kept on the lofty plane of 'realism' and 'truth'. From available evidence, *Greed's* substantial claim for greatness is rooted not in its revelation of 'merciless truth' (whatever that may be), but rather because of the integrity of the relationship between the artist and his chosen subject, and the rigorous and rhythmic pattern with which that subject is revealed to us.

Bazin, of course, does not evade the film itself. While charging his metaphors with external information, he limits his analysis to the films and considers them as options and opportunities in the course of film history. Yet his findings have reinforced, if not partially determined, the largely unquestioned realistic bias to the study of Stroheim. In 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema' Bazin wages a war against those who apotheosise the art of silent cinema as measured by the 'purity' of Russian montage and German Expressionism. Stroheim, with Murnau and Flaherty, becomes a flagbearer of an alternative cinema, one rooted in the photographic ontology of the film image. Their films establish meaning, contends Bazin, not from the juxtaposition of images, nor the distortion of the image, but by keeping a fixed eye on that which unfolds before the camera's gaze.

As important as this distinction is in the context of Bazin's incisive re-evaluation of film history and theory, we might well question the extent to which *Greed* specifically supports Bazin's claim that Stroheim rejects photographic expressionism and the 'tricks' of montage. It is upon this question that this essay is based. My purpose is not to condemn Bazin's approach so much as to rescue one of its necessary victims, hopefully illustrating neglected components of *Greed's* actual and possible success, a neglect fostered by an easy reliance on the Bazinian line and an acceptance of martyrdom as a criterion of artistic value. Bazin after all used Stroheim, as he used Murnau and Flaherty, to lay a foundation for an appreciation of what he perceived to be the new cinema of the 1940s. Stroheim is not the subject of his writing, but rather a building block toward the construction of a rational historical context for the films of Renoir, Welles and the Italian neo-realists. Most simply, Bazin took what he needed from Stroheim and ran with it.

Simplicity is useful, if not necessary, in the construction of general theories, but its ultimate legitimacy depends on the restudying of works plundered. Murnau, for instance, has emerged from his Bazinian role all the better for the renewed attention; the most simplistic of surveys accommodate his subjective and editorial inclinations, inclinations Bazin avoids. Yet Stroheim remains more read about than seen, a problem curtailing evaluation not derived from Bazin. Joel Finler's delineation of subjective and objective elements in *Greed* in his useful study of Stroheim's films has spawned little reconsideration of the realistic bias. And a close analysis of the relationship of subjective and symbolic sequences to the complex whole of *Greed* has been lacking.

The script of the complete *Greed* amplifies and clarifies patterns within the existing version, patterns which question much popular thought on the film. Part of my strategy will be to extrapolate the complete from the partial versions.* It is perhaps both dangerous and presumptuous to write descriptively and critically of a film three-quarters of which remains unseen. Yet the full *Greed* is, for all practical considerations, unseeable, and this qualification may itself be justification for an otherwise dubious enterprise.

In the Bazinian scheme of film realism, Stroheim surely would be located much closer to Welles than to Renoir, in that he opted for a rigorous control of the film image at the expense of the spontaneous. (Indeed, the modification of Bazinian realism with respect to Stroheim which I propose here might be applied to portions of Bazin's writings on Welles as well.) Such control indicates a 'realism' carefully nurtured and meticulously planned for. It is because of Stroheim's obvious care for detailed planning that his script, while relied upon here reluctantly, is of enormous use. It includes precise camera angle, movements and optical effects as well as the specifics of decor and gesture. Furthermore, the integrity of Stroheim's realisation to his written plan is confirmed by those sections of *Greed* which still exist. With help from Weinberg's book the extrapolations I offer here will be as visual as possible, although many sections necessarily require the visualising of scripted intentions.

*The script used here is the 1972 Lorrimer edition of the version first published by the Belgian Cinémathèque in 1958 and edited for Lorrimer by Joel Finler. The 1958 version is reportedly based on Stroheim's personal copy, which was preserved after his death by Denise Vernac.

2

Although studio editor June Mathis may have been on the side of the abusers during Stroheim's post-production war with M-G-M, her decision to change the title *McTeague* to *Greed* was honest to the film. For Stroheim's version is less the story of a single man and the fated lives of the people he touches than the study of intangible human impulses. Greed as a motivation is general here rather than idiosyncratic, and the thrust of the film is to visualise this abstraction with respect to the lives of a collection of characters. The screenplay, stills and existing film versions of *Greed* all point to Stroheim's basic aim: to make graphically concrete the power of greed and its corollary abstractions of vulnerability, secrecy and fear. Stroheim persistently explores and exploits the potential of his images to make palpable the delight, the burden, and finally the pathology of material accumulation.

This visualisation is partially achieved through a staggering authenticity of detail and observation. We see this most especially in the existing version at the home and dental parlour of Mac and Trina, and the San Francisco street outside their window. Yet deleted sections also were to define a special and significant clutter in other locales: the Sieppe household, Marcus's bedroom, Zerkow's junkyard shack. It is this aspect of *Greed*—the genuine locations and setting, the rendering of objects in relation to each other in a specific milieu—that has been honoured by the advocates of realistic cinema. Bazin in particular has outlined the rewards to be gained through the fixed eye of the camera. Yet, ironically, it is also through the structural and technical distinctions Bazin delineates that the realism of *Greed* can be seen as crucially *modified*.

Bazin first of all attacks the montage of Kuleshov, Eisenstein and Gance as allusions to, rather than conveyors of, events: 'Undoubtedly they derived at least the greater part of the constituent elements from the reality they were describing, but the final significance of the film was found to reside in the ordering of these elements much more than in their objective content.'† A similar contrast is constructed in Lewis Jacobs' early analysis of Stroheim in *The Rise of the American Film*, when he asserts that Stroheim's films 'are not based on the editing principle, but on the piling up of detail within the scene.' A similar line is most recently followed by V. F. Perkins in *Film as Film*, who claims 'few movies have made *less* use of edited details' than *Greed*, an extraordinary statement when one considers the extensive use of close-ups for analytical and symbolic ends throughout the film.

Surely the objects describing and defining the various environments initially function on this realistic level. Yet what is fascinating, and largely ignored, is how certain objects come to stand out amid the clutter and, reinforced across plot and subplot lines, assume symbolic significance. The relationship of scene to scene (on plot and

†André Bazin, 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema', in *What is Cinema?*, Vol. I (University of California Press, 1967).

character levels) and object to object (on a symbolic level) largely establishes the deterministic underpinning to the film. When Bazin finds the 'final significance' of *Greed* to be in the objective content of each image, he is in fact citing what is of final significance for his own theory. Ignored is the rigorous pattern of interrelationships with which Stroheim's fateful, visual web is woven.

What is first of all striking about the script of the complete *Greed* is the apparent unity and tightness of the film's structure despite its intended length. Those inclined to sympathise with a producer's desire to tidy up a sprawling project should examine the existing evidence here. Mac and Trina's marriage was to be juxtaposed with two other marriages, one sordid and the other sentimental. The first, between Maria, the servant woman of the shortened version, and Zerkow, a junkman completely removed, is of particular interest, taking up roughly one-fifth of Stroheim's screenplay (or a little less time than the entire released version). Their relationship, in contrast to the early stages of the McTeague marriage, is openly and neurotically rooted in greed: Zerkow proposes in hopes of discovering the mad Maria's imaginary golden plates and lives for her bizarre descriptions of them.

Zerkow eventually kills Maria for her teasing, and the marriage-murder motif counterpoints Mac and Trina's. Importantly, however, the relationship of plot and subplot also transcends story line. Objects with which both couples surround themselves correlate a common, instinctual denominator within distinctly different environments. Primary here is gold itself. We observe this briefly in extant prints when Trina begins to personify her gold, at one point speaking to the coins as a lover and at another physically and erotically submerging herself in them on her bed. We also observe scattered scenes in which her trunk, the coins locked inside, becomes a physical expression of the growing emotional barrier between herself and Mac. She desperately protects her cache as he slowwittedly becomes suspicious of her emotional investment in it.

What we don't see in the shortened version is:

(1) Mac's mother similarly hoarding a $20 gold piece in a cigar box before giving the coin to her son as he leaves home.

(2) Mac's desire for, purchase and sad selling of an enormous gilded molar, a strange piece of dental advertising which consumes an extraordinary amount of his attention and assumes a prominent place in the composition of numerous stills.

(3) The obsessive delight Zerkow pays to Maria's gold junk (non-cohesive, gilded tape and dental fillings) and the protectiveness he observes toward his safe, tucked away behind his grubby clothes.

(4) A series of expressionistic visualisations of Maria and Zerkow's lust for gold, some of which are preserved but rearranged in the shortened version.

(5) Extensive and deliberate documentation of the process by which an enraptured Trina lovingly polishes her coins, then hides them in a chamois bag, a brass matchbox, within her wedding dress, and finally in the trunk.

(6) The moon appearing through a telescope like a gold coin (a counterpart to similarly ominous sun imagery in the final Death Valley sequence).

The relationship of these images of greed and secrecy becomes still more glaring when we realise they were to be hand-tinted gold in each frame in which they appeared, a highly expressionistic device not only emphasising the objects' visual importance but challenging the illusion of reality in a black and white film. Further, relationships appear more structurally intricate when we discover that Mac and Trina's shack in the closing portion of their social and personal decline was to be Maria and Zerkow's former home. The nurtured madness of the McTeagues soon rivals that of the previous occupants.

Objects within the environments develop similarly, intensified through reappearance, compositions and close-up isolation, sometimes interacting with the established connotative quality of gold to form synthetic images. The freedom, vulnerability and imprisonment expressed in Mac's bird and birdcage, for example, is compounded by Stroheim's intention to hand-tint the cage gold. The bird itself reflects Mac's movement through the film: it hops in its cage when he kisses the etherised Trina, happily accepts a mate when Mac marries, nestles with its companion when Mac and Trina embrace, and fights when Mac and Trina quarrel. The birds weather the watch of a cat when Marcus visits and a vicious attack by the cat when Marcus succeeds in forcing Mac out of the dental profession. The female bird dies when Trina is murdered, and the male lands dead on the empty canteen in Death Valley when Mac tries to free it.

Most of the bird imagery remains in the shortened version, since it revolves around the main characters. Other animal imagery is butchered. Stroheim, for example, carefully cuts away to close-ups of snarling dogs when Mac and Marcus brawl. The movement in both confrontations (in distant places) parallels the other, a dynamic corroboration of the structural metaphor between man and animal. Maria buries a black cat hoping Zerkow will assume she is burying her gold. A black cat then watches Trina work as a scrubwoman, runs through her murder scene, and waits the next day at the site of the crime.

Even when we set aside for the moment the obviously expressionistic scenes in *Greed*, the symbolic and metaphorical qualities of these contextually 'real' objects cannot be ignored. The skeleton of their relationship disjointedly remains in the shortened *Greed*; in the full version all major symbols are meticulously established in the opening mining camp sequence. Frank Norris's explanation of how McTeague becomes a dentist consists of a half-page flashback in the novel. Stroheim, however, uses this sequence at the outset to establish crucial relationships between people and animals, people and objects, as well as specifically defining McTeague's nature. Animals and objects are first viewed as part of an authenticated environment, but as the action develops and grows increasingly fatalistic and less rationally controlled, the network of images emerges with striking clarity. Significantly, these images draw their connotative power from their juxtaposition with other images *outside* their indigenous frame, scene or sequence.

This is not to suggest that ironical and metaphorical juxtapositions do not exist *within* the frame as well. Deep focus is used to contrast Trina's lowly scrubwoman figure with Mac's hulking silhouette as he comes to kill her on Christmas Eve. And perhaps the most cited moment in *Greed* is that of the wedding ceremony where, as the rings are exchanged, a funeral hearse and cortège is seen passing outside the window. The clear juxtaposition here is between ceremonial events, one celebrating marriage and the other ritualising death, with ironic and ominous reverberations.

Yet we should examine this scene more closely within the context of the complete

McTeague (Gibson Gowland) with the huge golden tooth. Another cut scene

Greed. The juxtaposition is composed of *two* parts. The shot described above is followed by a slow dissolve to the funeral procession as it would be framed by the window. Furthermore, the motif of life inside and outside, as framed by the window, recurs throughout the film. Mac makes his first appearance as a dentist in the shortened version as a white-coated figure in a bay window of his office. Removed, however, are two interesting shots involving the sentimental couple in Mac's apartment house, Old Grannis and Miss Baker. Their marriage is first intimated through a scene outside their window, shot from their point of view, where an organ grinder's monkeys kiss. After the marriage Stroheim again moves to their window and the dreary, rain-washed street dissolves into an Eden-like setting of apple and peach orchards in full bloom (and in colour).

This window motif becomes more complex when we realise that the wedding ceremony takes place in a photographic studio adjoining Mac's office. Furthermore, in the full version, Stroheim establishes the tension between framed activity and still life in a shot *outside* the studio. Massive advertisements for the business on the side of the building are interrupted by a series of windows which frame the occupants within. Later on, the wedding photograph taken at the ceremony reappears in various places and conditions: once auctioned, it is returned to the McTeagues by sentimental Grannis; Mac and Trina fight beneath the photo on the mantle, their past images hovering above in ironic counterpoint to their present state; Mac finds the picture torn in half in a garbage can outside their shack after leaving home; and his half of the happy portrait is used on 'wanted' posters to track him down for his crime upon Trina, the now unattached partner of the original photograph.

Finally, the funeral procession itself is not without visual reverberation outside its specific use during the ceremony. Deep focus is at work in an early shot of the burial of Mac's father. In the foreground the coffin is lowered. Later in the film Maria's dead baby, encased in a miniature coffin, is first tossed amid the junk by Zerkow, then rescued by its mother. Later still, Maria buries the cat and Zerkow digs for it crazily, thinking it's gold. Finally, in perhaps the most fascinating still in Weinberg's collection, we see Zerkow's dream of digging up coffins in an expressionistic ceremony of the lust for gold.

These are the possible ramifications of simply a single shot examined in its intended context. In print the images perhaps appear excessively literary, yet even in the shortened version, and in existing stills, one senses how their visual integration and modification gives them cinematic life. The point is that, as much as detail and decor may contribute to an authentication of our perception of a two-dimensional, black and white image, it is the rigorous network into which these details are woven that, over a period of film time, succeeds in providing us with a mental image of a deterministic world. The sense of foreboding in the marriage ceremony may be suggested partially through spatial unity, but it is the interrelationship of the scene's objective components—the coffin, the window, the gold ring, as well as the physical presence of the characters—which creates a tension between life moving and life caught, between actions initiated and actions determined, between the film image as an entry point to the living world and as a reflection of that world's most ossified illusions.

3

What then are we to make of expressionistic scenes in *Greed* where Stroheim is quite willing to distort the film image to suggest obsessive, grotesque and fatalistic qualities in his subject matter? Bazin ignores the scenes entirely. Weinberg refers to them as 'a kind of leitmotif throughout the scenes between Zerkow and Maria,' and then brings them under the umbrella of realism by asserting that while they first appear hyperbolic, 'they are so close to the reality itself that they could almost pass for it.' Which is to say they operate close to the reality *of the film*, a point with which I would agree. But this use of the term 'reality' avoids the Bazinian connotation of a world outside the film objectively corroborated.

The expressionistic scenes are abstracted from any locale established in the rest of the film, and the distortion of shapes and sizes suggests a symbolic, rather than literal, value to the images. They clearly do not authenticate *Greed's* objective sphere. Yet neither do they exist apart from it. If we consider the emergence of symbols in the objective portions of *Greed* and reconstruct the mutilated relationship among the film's parts, a pattern to the seemingly eclectic elements can be discerned. First of all, as Finler has pointed out, outside of the expressionistic sequences there were to be several shots from a *subjective* point of view. Transitional dissolves were to warn the audience of the 'imaginary' nature of these shots. An example remains in the existing version: Mac's mother visualises her son as the travelling dentist being paid for services rendered in the mining camp town. Mother McTeague's ambition for her son is also made visible in a similar dissolve, cut from the film, in which we move from a correspondence school advertisement she is reading to Mac as a self-confident, elegantly dressed businessman. Mac's own passion—the oversized, gilded tooth—was to be similarly suggested later on when the molar is dissolved into Mac's bay window as he watches from the street below. In the existing version there are also obvious, though well-integrated, examples of Stroheim's interference with the purely 'translucent' lens of his camera to establish the subjectivity of a specific shot within an objective context. Before Mac brings himself to kiss Trina, for instance, his etherised patient becomes hazy, out of focus, suggesting his dreamy gaze. Later, with wedding night prospects ahead, Trina's tears are expressed in her blurry-eyed view of the birds in their gilded cage.

The birds, of course, are well-established by this point as aviary analogies to Mac and Trina, thus the shot is logical and unobtrusive. Similarly, the spectacular transformation of the street outside the apartment into a glorious, hand-tinted orchard through the window-frame of Grannis and Miss Baker would have derived its logic from the special, metaphorical use of the window throughout the film, the beauty of the old couple's subjective vision of their marriage contrasting with the foreboding quality of the earlier McTeague ceremony.

The metaphorically and sentimentally charged wedding photograph also is

Trina and Mac (ZaSu Pitts, Gibson Gowland) with the wedding day photograph. Left: in the empty apartment

involved in Stroheim's graceful transition from objective to subjective passages. Planned for the complete *Greed* was the selling of the McTeague furnishings, with Old Grannis purchasing and returning the wedding portrait as a gesture of kindness. Memory quickened by the photograph, Mac and Trina stand in their empty apartment and the wedding ceremony dissolves into a subjective shot of the dining room. Mac puts the wedding ring on Trina's finger and the scene dissolves back into bare walls and floor. A series of tearful and, according to the script, 'significant' looks are followed by a similar dissolve to the wedding supper, then a cut to Trina's wedding bouquet as it now hangs in the bedroom. The script at this point reads:

'Quick lap dissolve in to close-up of the wedding bouquet. It goes out of focus. Medium shot of Mac and Trina seen through a double veil. Trina breaks down, sobbing, and puts her arms around McTeague's waist; he lowers his head and nods stupidly, while she sobs. Iris out.'*

We then immediately are to see a gigantic, gilded hand against a black background as it crushes a nude man and woman in its fist. They struggle, then fall limp.

In the released version of the film this shot is used after Mac kills Trina and walks off into the night. In its proper context, however, we can observe Stroheim's progression: an *objective* viewpoint of Mac and Trina, a *subjective* visualisation of their thoughts (within an authenticated location), and finally a purely *symbolic* expression of their fated struggle at the hands of gold lust. The final image is abstracted from setting (through the black backdrop), from actuality (through bizarre graphic proportions), and from character viewpoint (through Stroheim's conventional, transitional use of the iris). Yet the gilded hand follows logically from the other established images of entrapment: the gold birdcage and wedding ring, dogcages, cobwebs and mousetraps. Rigorous with his subject—greed and its effects—rather than with any preconceived notion of what is cinematically valid and what is not, Stroheim keeps his structural and technical options open to accommodate his visual task.

Similarly, the expressionist dreams of Maria and Zerkow draw part of their emotional energy from their relation to other objectively located images. Stroheim moves from objective shots of the couple's excited reaction to gold junk to subjective visualisations of their greed by way of titles that suggest the lure of being able to *see* the emotional value people invest in objects. The literal logic of these titles breaks down into incoherent yet expressive form. 'Had a flying squirrel and let him go' and 'it rang like so many bells. Red, gold—you know—like oranges' become code phrases to provoke the visual imagination. As Maria tells Zerkow as they enter a dream trance: 'It fair dazzled your eyes.'

Stroheim took his filmic task to heart and dazzled: distorted gold-tinted dishes were removed by mysterious hands from misshapen trunks; plates swung madly against weird shadows. (The first of these is seen in the shortened version, although re-edited, after Trina stashes her gold coins in her trunk.) At first visualisations of Maria's madness, the visions become shared by Maria and Zerkow and, during her illness, are Zerkow's own. It is in this last instance that juxtaposed images of death (ritualised through burial and objectified with the coffin) and gold are expressionistically mined: white-lit, distended crosses surround Zerkow's dream-self as he digs up gilded pitchers and bowls from a nightmarish graveyard.

Once established as an expressionistic extension of the intangible force of greed in the lives of Maria and Zerkow, a distorted image is used for Trina as well. Where gilded pitchers and bowls connect Zerkow's dream with Maria's 'realistic' story of hidden serviceware, for Trina elongated hands play with gold coins, pulling objective weight from her own cache. Yet, importantly, Trina's shot is not shown to be consciously subjective. Maria and Zerkow enter the image by way of dissolves from their gazing faces, but the image is separated (and abstracted) from Trina by irising out and fading in. In the first case the distortion is consciously personal; in the second the distortion, while symbolically connected to Trina's obsession, is not created by her.

The expressionistic device therefore infests our perception of Trina without her own participation. Maria's objective madness has subjectively led to a collective, psychotic imagery. The suggestion is that Maria's insanity reflects a deep-rooted impulse unconsciously held by objectively 'normal' characters, not an uncommon notion on madness today but somewhat unusual for Hollywood in 1923. By establishing this subjective connection between Trina and Maria, Stroheim would have established cinematically the fatalistic pull of events we sense in the lives of Trina and Mac in the severely abridged version, invoking that strange confluence of biological and sociological forces which operate at the heart of naturalistic literature.

Discovery of the murdered Maria (Dale Fuller); her haunting of Trina; Zerkow's dream of a graveyard of gold. All cut scenes

Briefly then, Stroheim's imagery in *Greed* is three times transformed and intensified. First, objects accrue symbolic value while functioning within an authenticated environment. Second, the objects are distorted and deformed through the power of the mind's eye to transform the objective world. Third, the images come to exist outside of authenticated time and space, isolated against an abstract setting. In this progression we see the refinement of Stroheim's visual strategy. As if the clutter of each carefully described milieu becomes too much for the film frame to bear, gradually the essential images, composed of common elements, are highlighted, isolated and intensified. Objective worth is replaced by symbolic existence within the film frame. Importantly, the same burden of clutter and accumulation is involved in Trina's narrowing of focus. The function of objects is lost in her erotic absorption with her coins, the currency's market-place value denied and its symbolic value clung to even when she and Mac are starving.

Bazin's omission of subjective and symbolic elements in Stroheim becomes most unfair when he praises 1940s film-makers for their modification, as well as their resurrection, of 'realist' cinema: 'Undoubtedly it is primarily with the Stroheim–Murnau trend—almost totally eclipsed from 1930 to 1940—that the cinema has more or less consciously linked up once more over the last ten years. But it has no intention of limiting itself simply to keeping this trend alive . . . so far from wiping out once and for all the conquest of montage, this reborn realism gives them a body of reference and a meaning. It's only an increased realism of the image that can support the abstraction of montage.'

Even the mutilated version of *Greed* indicates that Stroheim, as well as Murnau, was similarly modifying 'realism', was working within neither limits nor trends, and was aware of the advantages of objective and subjective strategies in accommodating abstractions.

We cannot blame Bazin for not postulating *Greed's* rigour and rhythm from the version that survived severe abuses; indeed, we can only suggest that possibility now based on available evidence. Yet we can surely question the rigid thinking born of Bazin's critical evaluations. Homage perhaps thrives on mystery; the Holy Grail (Weinberg's metaphor for *Greed*) is more powerful for its elusiveness. Yet we need not rely on *Greed's* sorry elusiveness, and the agony suffered in its creation, to justify our praise. ■

Greed (Classic Film Scripts) edited by Joel Finler (New York, 1972).

RICHIE'S OZU: Our Prehistoric Present

Jonathan Rosenbaum

A few years ago in New York, a lecture by Henri Langlois was announced at the Museum of Modern Art under the rough heading—I quote from memory—of 'Why We Know Nothing About Cinema'. When this imposing archivist took the podium, he started off by wryly noting that this title was a misnomer; he was a victim of false advertising, and disappointed patrons should repair at once to the box-office for a refund. 'I'm very sorry,' Langlois explained, 'but I don't know why we know nothing about cinema.'

Detailed criticism of the Japanese cinema is for obvious reasons a task that most Western critics shy away from (one reason, perhaps, why we still have no extended study of Mizoguchi in English). Given this situation, Donald Richie occupies a privileged position in relation to his subject that is virtually unparalleled in film scholarship; on a great many matters, he cannot even be appraised, merely trusted or not trusted. He is usually trusted. 'The definitive history,' Dwight Macdonald wrote of Joseph L. Anderson's and Richie's *The Japanese Film* (1959) in 1966, neglecting to mention that it also happened to be the only one, at least in English. By and large, Richie's subsequent books have been accorded comparable receptions, and have served as basic scaffolding for most other works on related subjects.

In many crucial respects, Richie's *Ozu: His Life and Work** is substantially the book that devotees of the director have been waiting for: a full-length critical work about Ozu's life, career and working methods, buttressed with reproductions of pages from his notebooks and shooting scripts, numerous quotes from co-workers and Japanese critics, a great many stills and an unusually detailed filmography. It is an impressive array—but also a rather deceptive one. By ostensibly 'filling in the gaps' of what has remained, in the West, an incomplete and uncertain picture of a singular Japanese master, Richie is primarily concerned with resolving certain issues and problems; insofar as it is feasible, he appears to be giving us Yasujiro Ozu 'whole', as a coherent, consistent and legible entity. But in the course of his efforts, this 'whole' becomes a Procrustean bed—raising other issues and problems that relate not only to Ozu but to Richie's methodology, and the critical tradition it largely reflects.

Unlike Richie, I am not an Ozu scholar and have no speaking knowledge of Japanese. Out of the thirty-odd Ozu films that exist today (nineteen or twenty more are lost), I have seen twenty, many without any sort of translation. A recent opportunity to see or resee half of these has afforded me a chance to 'test' Richie's book for its usefulness and accuracy in certain areas, and the results—some of which are detailed below—have not been altogether encouraging.

It is an open question whether we would know very much at all about Ozu today without Donald Richie. It is unquestionable that most of what we *do* know comes from two sources: the films of Ozu that are available, and Donald Richie. That we nevertheless know very little, and a lot less than we conceivably might, about Ozu, is the essential point of these remarks.

Problem No. 1. Much as Ozu repeated certain plots and dramatic situations many times over the course of his career, Richie has repeated certain adages about Ozu endlessly. On the copyright page of *Ozu*, we discover that 'Portions of this book originally appeared in *Film Quarterly*, *Film Comment* and *Eiga Hyoron*, as well as Shochiku and New Yorker film catalogues, and programme notes for The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Cinema 16, and The Boston Museum of Fine Arts,' which helps to explain why so much of the book has a familiar ring; we've been reading it for years. Nor is this list complete: portions of the text have also figured in *The Japanese Film*, *Japanese Movies* (1961) and *Japanese Cinema* (1971). Occasionally the phrases are altered slightly as they crop up insistently over the years, but there is seldom evidence of rethinking. The 'man on the street' in *The Japanese Film* 'who will say of a new Ozu film: "That picture really has the Japanese flavour" ' becomes, twelve years later, the 'man-on-the-street' who will tell you that ' "[Ozu] has the real Japanese flavour" '; by 1974, Richie has distilled the essence of this down to, 'Ozu, one is told, "had the real Japanese flavour".'

In 1959, Ozu is 'considered by the Japanese as "the most Japanese of all directors" '; in 1961 and 1971, 'The Japanese—film critic and paying customer alike—think Ozu the most Japanese of all directors'; and the Preface to *Ozu* begins: 'The Japanese continue, ten years after his death, to think of Yasujiro Ozu as the most Japanese of all their directors.' Assuming that such a statement has some truth or meaning, it might understandably be worth reiterating in different contexts. But in that case, what can we make of the following observation about Mizoguchi and Ozu, on page 114 of the new book? '. . . The two film-makers shared many of the same assumptions and proceeded in a roughly similar fashion. Their aesthetic aims were also similar, though one can agree with Yoshikata Yoda, Mizoguchi's scenarist, when he said that Mizoguchi was the more Japanese of the two.'

Such an inconsistency would seem relatively trivial were it not so symptomatic of a general tendency to reduce Ozu's stylistic traits to simplistic formulae (which are subsequently forgotten). On the second page of the Preface, this leads to some outright errors which seriously distort important aspects of the early work, set down in three consecutive sentences (the italics are mine): 'From early in his career... Ozu used *only one* kind of shot: a shot taken from the level of a person seated in traditional fashion on the tatami. Whether indoors or out, the Ozu camera is *always* about three feet above the ground, and is rarely moved. In the early films, though there were numerous dolly shots, *there were few pan shots*.'

The first two overstatements are self-evident; the third becomes problematical only if one has seen, say, *That Night's Wife* (1930), a rather remarkable thriller which abounds in pan shots of an especially intriguing sort—set within a cluttered one-

'*Passing Fancy*'

*University of California Press, 1974, £7.25.

'That Night's Wife': a contemporary publicity photograph

room flat in which nearly all the film's action occurs, where they habitually begin or end with one of the actors and sweep across some portion of the décor, intensifying the sense of claustrophobia while stringing the characters and their labyrinthine surroundings together on the same descriptive and narrative threads. One recalls, too, the striking and extended pans over a city vista —clearly not shot from anything like 'about three feet above the ground'—which frame the action of *Days of Youth* (1929), a film that, according to Richie, is 'the earliest extant of the director's works.' But has Richie seen it?

Problem No. 2. It is impossible to say. Indeed, a specifically worrisome aspect of *Ozu* is that we can seldom be sure which films Richie has seen and which ones he is 'covering' through secondary sources—a grave flaw in many of the most reputable film books, to be sure, but one that presents a particular problem here. *Days of Youth* and *That Night's Wife* are cases in point: each of these very different movies is fascinating in a number of ways; together they demonstrate both Ozu's extraordinary assimilation of Hollywood cinema in the Twenties and subtle deviations from its norms which forecast many of his more characteristic formal procedures.

About the latter film—with its crowded Sternbergian textures and tensions, its lyrical control of accent and detail, its unusual interrelations of characters and décor—Richie has little to say beyond a few fleeting references. His throwaway gloss on its experimental nature is so non-committal that it leaves one hanging, almost like the mysterious 'non-motivated' tracking shot along a street that concludes *Woman of Tokyo* (1933) (to which Richie is noticeably more attentive): 'Ozu wanted to photograph [*That Night's Wife*] entirely within one small set (except for the opening), and then had trouble plotting the action. Nonetheless the film was praised, and Shochiku's Shiro Kido was particularly taken with it.' Which leads one to wonder (1) what sort of trouble? and (2) why 'nonetheless'? (Is Ozu's 'trouble' necessarily our own, or Shiro Kido's?) And the fact that the *end* of the film as well as the beginning takes place outside the flat leads one to suspect that Richie isn't very familiar with the work.

Days of Youth—a delightful foray into Hawksian territory, with two college students competing for the favours of a pretty girl—reveals Tatsuo Saito (one of the most ubiquitous of Ozu's regulars, who appeared in at least twenty-two of the early films) as something of a comic wonder. An improbable blend of sensitive awkwardness and unruffled angularity, he suggests an odd compromise of sorts between Harold Lloyd, a youthful William Burroughs and a spectacled ant-eater, with a glancing touch of Jerry Lewis, seen at his best in an early gag sequence with the heroine. While waiting on the street for her to attend to some shopping, he casually rests one hand on a newly painted post; when she returns, he hides his embarrassment by holding his hands behind his back, only to be confounded by a passerby who picks up a stray glove on the street that is the same colour as his hand, and offers it to him. In a teashop, after he discovers that he's left a handprint on his cup, a lovely little suite of complications develops as he places his hat over the cup, then absent-mindedly rests his chin on the painted hand, progressively getting more and more entrapped in the concealment.

Another point of interest in this charming movie is the very uncharacteristic techniques used by Ozu at various junctures, such as a series of subjective camera angles during the long ski trip that comprises the film's middle section, when the camera 'falls down' with Saito, other skiers are seen sideways, and snow even gets splattered on the lens. One notices, too, some early evidences of Ozu's formalism, such as the matching pans that frame the story and various 'symmetrical' cuts (e.g., from one chimney to another, or from Saito's swaying ski stick after he topples over to a cluster of flags waving in the wind at a ski event).

While one could hardly claim that *Days of Youth* is a major work, it is at the very least an arresting one, and some of its comedy is on a par with the wonderful opening sequence of *Passing Fancy* (1933) at a *naniwabushi* recital (when a stray purse gets surreptitiously picked up, investigated, and tossed around like a beanbag by various spectators until the entire assemblage, reciter included, is dancing about from an attack of lice). One would expect, then, that any serious Ozu scholar would pay some heed to it. Yet all that Richie has done in *Ozu*—apart from noting at one point that, like all of Ozu's subsequent films, it shows actors directly facing the camera—is to expand his original commentary on the film (in *Film Comment*, Spring 1971) from five words ('A student comedy about skiing') to seven: 'Another student comedy, this one about skiing.' And if one searches in his book for something about Tatsuo Saito—an actor who went on to play the father in *I Was Born, But . . .* (1932), and figured centrally in several of the twenty other Ozu films where he appeared—one finds that he isn't even listed in the index; in fact, the only reference to him in the entire book is the observation that he 'keeps rubbing his hip during various scenes' in *Tokyo Chorus*.

'Days of Youth'

Problem No. 3. In those cases where it seems more likely that Richie *has* seen the film in question, one intermittently finds that he has a rather creative memory. Given the general looseness of his approach, this is perhaps to be expected, and if he recalls the wrong characters in one low-angle shot or some nonexistent 'golf scenes' that 'go on for some time' in *What Did the Lady Forget?* (1937)—an upper-class comedy bearing the same sort of relationship to Lubitsch that *Days of Youth* and *That Night's Wife* bear to Hawks and Sternberg respectively—one must admit that mistakes of this sort are common in film criticism.

But when he makes mistakes about *An Autumn Afternoon* (1962), Ozu's last film—by most accounts, including Richie's, one of the major works—one begins to have serious doubts. Quoting from Kogo Noda's diary about his work on the script with Ozu —' "We more or less decide on a man who has a friendship with a woman who resembles his dead wife",' Richie adds, '[a lead not followed up by the finished film],' although anyone can plainly perceive that it was and is, in the bar scenes. Even more oddly, he can describe the final sequence by writing that 'father and son are in their beds' when the script fragment reproduced in the book, the accompanying still *and* the film itself all unmistakably reveal that only the son goes to bed—when indeed, the very point of the sequence rests on the fact that

Tatsuo Saito, 'one of the most ubiquitous of Ozu's regulars', as the father in 'I Was Born, But . . .' and (right) in the comedy 'What Did the Lady Forget?'

the father *doesn't*. And how can he distort this scene even further by implying that the father's singing of a patriotic song is followed immediately by the end credit?

Some of these lapses and lacunae may partially be a function of the book's structure. As Richie explains in his Introduction, he conceives of it as a structure approximating to 'Ozu's method of creation': 'I begin . . . with a discussion of Ozu's themes, since that is where he himself would have begun, and go directly into the dialogue, trying to approximate his working method in my own presentation. Later I discuss the way in which he shot and edited his picture, and the effect of the finished film itself.'

This is fine in theory, and certainly it facilitates an exposition of Ozu's working methods, which is probably the most valuable achievement in the book. Ozu's manner of constructing dialogue scripts on the later films with his writers—a process involving cards on a table, each card bearing the components of a single scene and worked on as a discrete unit, along with many bottles of sake—provides excellent material, and Richie makes the most of it. (*Tokyo Story*, one discovers, required 103 days and 43 bottles of sake: it appears that Ozu and his collaborators kept careful track of such details.*) It seems clear that Ozu's conception of scenes as autonomous blocks was crucial not only to his principles of construction, but also to the depolarised, decentralised focus of his narratives, the absence of a 'privileged' subjectivity of approach towards any of his characters or settings. 'Tokyo's an attractive city,' one character remarks in *Early Summer* (1951), and Ozu cuts to a view of the city that neither supports nor undermines the comment: the phrase and subsequent shot are treated as formal equivalents in the narrative, but are in no way illustrative of one another; rather like complementary images in haiku, they eschew any sense of cause and effect by accentuating the mutual independence of the separate elements.

Unfortunately, Richie's division of *Ozu* into successive stages of 'creation' inevitably leads to the erection of a Platonic ideal, an all-purpose model of 'the' Ozu film—an unrigorous model indeed when what one concretely has to contend with are *films*, each with its own peculiar set of conditions and stresses. Since Richie has more production details about the later films, these tend to dictate most of the dimensions of the model, and the lost films implicitly become subsumed in the same homogenising process whenever Richie speaks about the entire body of the work. The usual approach is to lump together examples of certain aspects or procedures, leading to the formulation of such generalities as 'the Ozu family'. This results in a profusion of catalogues, some quite nonsensical in presumed meanings and applications: 'Another pastime to which the Ozu family is addicted is toenail cutting, an activity which seems worth mentioning because it occurs possibly more often in Ozu's pictures (*Late Spring*, *Early Summer*, *Late Autumn*) than in Japanese life.' In the long run, individual works are made to seem important or unimportant insofar as they help or fail to exemplify the hypothetical model.

Problem No. 4. Which leads us to the sticky matter of Richie's evaluations. There is a running theme in *Ozu* about what is bad and good in the director's work. What is good can be summed up by the word 'humanity'; what is bad is 'formalism' (identical to 'mere formalism'):

'Without the rigorous frame that is the director's technique, the intense humanity of the character could not be so completely revealed. Without the useless and lovable humanity of the Ozu character, the film's structure would degenerate (as indeed it sometimes does) into mere formalism.'

'Though sometimes the "empty" scene, whether or not it has people in it, seems almost formalistic . . . usually it is correctly formal in the sense that it is an integral part of Ozu's dramatic construction and serves to convey his interpretations.'

'With true art—the art that art conceals—Ozu triumphs in making a formal device *appear* natural.'

These are terms worth considering. As Richie uses them, it means that a formal device is 'natural' if it is invisible, i.e. if it dissolves into 'humanity', 'the way things are', 'the way life is', without showing us that it *is* showing us that. At one point, after an effective analysis of the compositional shifts during a family get-together in *The Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family* (1941)—a film that, shot for shot, must be one of the most beautifully composed works in cinema, with characters and upper-class domestic settings integrated in gift-box arrangements which never cease to amaze—Richie adds, almost apologetically, that 'All of this . . . is done with such naturalness and ease that it does not draw one's attention to the composition (unless one is writing a book about Ozu) . . .'

Since I don't happen to be writing a book about Ozu and *do* think about Ozu's formal devices (which include his characters), Richie's analysis would have it that I'm being 'unnatural'. But this viewpoint is based on an either/or premise that impoverishes the potentialities of films and spectators alike. For a director like Ozu, whose brilliance and fascination largely rests on the virtual *interchangeability* of social and cinematic forms, it is merely myopic to assume that we must pay heed to one and ignore the other: why can't we attend to both?

That such an awareness *does* work against sentimentality, simple identification and blindness to the medium is worth stressing. In a spirit comparable to Richie's, Andrew Sarris once described *Playtime* as a 'non-human comedy'—apparently forgetting the people it was about and addressed to, not to mention the person who made it—and surely it would be hard to find a better instance of another expression of equivalence between social and cinematic forms. The point isn't whether one sees it as cinematic forms expressed in social terms or as social forms

*Although Richie takes up Ozu's fondness for spirits, he neglects to relate this to aspects of the films. It is questionable how fruitful such an exercise might be, but it does provide an intriguing clue to an enigmatic pair of camera movements in *What Did the Lady Forget?*, each of which introduces a scene in a bar by traversing the words on a placard: 'I drink upon occasion, sometimes on no occasion. Don Quichotte (sic)'—enigmatic because it is difficult to imagine Japanese audiences understanding this untranslated English inscription; intriguing because it suggests a possible fusion of Ozu's formalist procedures with a potential capacity for injecting relatively 'private' aspects of his personality into these 'open spaces'. This consideration apart, knowledge of Ozu's heavy drinking *does* add some measure of poignancy to Chishu Ryu's drunk scenes in *Tokyo Story* and *An Autumn Afternoon*.

'*Woman of Tokyo*'

expressed in cinematic terms, but the fact that Ozu and Tati operate in a context where both registers and viewpoints are fully at work (or at play, if one prefers). To attempt to see one at the expense of the other is to see only half a film.

In *Woman of Tokyo*—which concerns a young woman secretly working as a prostitute to help pay for her brother's education, until he discovers the fact and kills himself—the 'unmotivated' dolly along the street which closes the film is formally prefigured in an earlier sequence. Here another, *apparently* unmotivated dolly along a street eventually catches up with the footsteps of the agitated brother after a fight with his sister, so that the tension between human absence and presence in this shot prepares us for the disturbing absence in the shorter dolly at the end. Fifteen years later, in *A Hen in the Wind* (1948)—in which a husband returns from the war to discover that his wife worked briefly as a prostitute to pay for their sick child's medical bills—the climactic scene of the husband pushing the wife down a flight of stairs is itself 'prepared for' by a previous scene in which a metal container is no less accidentally sent toppling down the same steps. The wife's implied equivalence to an object is thus a function of both the husband's shame and his frustrated response to it. In a film where even the more obtrusive 'Hollywood' elements—such as the staging of the final clinch when the husband forgives his wife—testify to Japan's devastation by the war, Ozu's formalism once again serves to *objectify* all the elements at hand; and the difference between the 'unresolved' despair at the end of *Woman of Tokyo* and the more conventional resolution of 'adjustment' in *A Hen in the Wind* may well be more a reflection of Japanese history than of any autonomous evolution on Ozu's part in isolation from this.*

But in both instances, our grasp of the characters and their problems is inextricably bound up in our capacity to *notice* these and countless other formal elements, rather than try to share the characters' consciousnesses. (To promote this separation further, Ozu shows us virtually nothing of the brother's school experience *or* the sister's experience as a prostitute in the former, just as the latter is equally reticent about the husband's career as a soldier and the wife's as a geisha: all these 'facts' are established mainly by their consequences. Nor is there any moral judgment: the very notion of an Ozu villain is unthinkable.) And spectators who find Ozu's films boring and uninvolving are, as likely as not, responding passively to this enforced distance: accustomed to viewing cinema as 'life' and not as cinema, they are denied access to Ozu's intelligence as well as their own.

Even without any evident desire to foster this stalemate, Richie's anti-formalist approach can ultimately serve only to promote it. Whereas for a Russian formalist like Boris Eikhenbaum, film 'comes into being as a result of turning nature into material,' for Richie it appears to follow an inverse route. But one man's 'life' or 'nature' is often another man's platitude: who is Richie to say that the dolly closing *Woman of Tokyo* makes us feel 'as though the film, like life, could have gone on forever,' when much of its cryptic power is to take us away from the comfort of such banalities?

A particularly unfortunate casualty of Richie's impressionistic illusionism is his treatment of Ozu's unconventional attitudes toward editing continuity, which are regarded as 'unaccountable lapses' at best, 'unnatural' eyesores at worst:

'For a director with a style so severe, an outlook so austere, Ozu could be incredibly untidy. Perhaps we are mistaken in equating austerity with neatness, but . . . we are still left with unaccountable lapses in Ozu's films. Actually, Ozu was meticulous about his script, rigid about his editing, severe with his actors, but relaxed when it came to the actual shooting. There is no other way to account for the lapses of continuity in his films. In *A Woman of Tokyo* (sic) the teapot is bubbling away in the background, steam rising. Ozu cuts to, of all things, a close-up of the pot itself. No steam, no bubbles, an apparently cold teapot. Then back again to the heroine: no time has passed, it is the same scene. The director simply had not noticed that the pot was bubbling away in one scene (sic) and not at all in the next.'

More accurately, one might say that in the same scene Ozu cuts from an *ostensibly* steaming pot in the background to an only *slightly* steaming pot in the foreground—succeeded next, if memory serves correctly, by a smoking chimney. But the implications remain, and comparable continuity lapses are observable throughout Ozu's work, whether in the frequent 'mismatching' of successive gazes between conversing characters, or—to take an isolated example from *Tokyo Story* (1953) cited by Richie—the cut from the grandparents seated on the Atami sea wall to another shot of the same couple seated in reverse positions. Richie actually attempts to excuse some of these switches by asserting that 'Often one is too interested and involved in the film to notice'; and it must be admitted that they usually escape the attention of most spectators, at least on a conscious level. Nevertheless, it is revealing that Richie assumes 'the film' to be somehow distinguishable from the succession of images composing it, and 'interest' and 'involvement' a matter of ignoring these images. And he is less forgiving about 'Ozu's passion for composition at the beginnings of his films, where carefulness can be obtrusive, or where it becomes obsessive.'

As a bracing alternative to this reductive reasoning, it is worth considering the more sophisticated methodology used by Noël Burch in relation to virtually the same phenomena—Ozu's discontinuous editing and his compositions without human presences—in a forthcoming study of Japanese cinema, scheduled for publication by Secker and Warburg, which Burch has kindly allowed me to quote from here. Although a brief examination of 'The model systemics of Ozu Yasujiro' in this context cannot do justice to the range of its argument, a few samples might be illuminating.

Inscribed within a Marxist framework and making certain uses of semiological disciplines, Burch's analysis treats the two phenomena cited above as procedures which decisively challenge the assumptions and 'codes' of Western cinema in general and Hollywood in particular. The principal form of discontinuous editing discussed by Burch is the 'false' matching of the directions of successive gazes in relation to the spectator:

'. . . A reverse field series in his mature work is seen as a succession of flat surfaces 'side by side' rather than face to face; there is no imaginary space between them in which to ensnare the subject, as it were, for there is no encounter of any projecting eyelines (*the necessary complements in Western cinema of the receding and converging parallels of deep space*). Similarly—and this is particularly true of *Ukigusa Monogatari* [*A Story of Floating Weeds*, 1934] and *Hitori Musuko* [*The Only Son*, 1936]—the systematic neglect of direction-matching (of frame exits and entrances) tends to prevent successive shots of a given interior from 'flowing into one

*A similar difference can be seen between the more tragic implications of the young boys' rebellion against their father in *I was Born, But . . .* (1932), which exposes a sense of society's limitations, and the sunnier, more 'philosophical' stance of *Good Morning* (1959), the 'remake', where these limitations—and comparable cinematic curtailments—are more or less taken for granted, circumscribing a view of middle-class suburbia that no longer deviates far from the norms of light comedy.

another naturally': the mental reconstitution of a three-dimensional space on the basis of these 'badly joined' flat images requires a considerable effort of memory and imagination, i.e. a *reading*.'

In the case of Ozu's shots without human presences—which some critics have called 'still lifes' (although, as Burch notes, landscapes occasionally fill the same function, and in Ozu's silent films these shots aren't always motionless), and which Burch designates as 'pillow-shots', after the 'pillow-word' of classical Japanese poetry—the implications are at times equally disruptive and provocative:

'. . . any prolonged or diagetically "unmotivated" absence of human beings from the screen in a fiction feature film (unless the images are so heavily connotated as to function like titles, conveying such clear, unambiguous messages as "Sunday" or "Spooky house") is received as a departure from the codes, taking the form of a poetic message in a film like Antonioni's *L'Eclisse* or a more fundamental critical aggression in Paulino Viota's *Contactos*.'

Perhaps more to the point, Burch quotes from a particularly beautiful and relevant passage in Roland Barthes' *L'Empire des Signes*:

'. . . Perhaps what is called *satori* in Zen and occidentals can only translate with vaguely Christian words (*illumination, revelation, intuition*), is simply that panic suspension of language, that blank which blots out of our minds the reign of the Codes, the breaking off of that interior recitation which constitutes our self; and if this state of non-language is a liberation, it is because the buddhist experience regards the proliferation of second degree thoughts (the thoughts of thought), or the infinite supplement of surplus signifieds, if one prefers to call it that—the circle of which language is both the repository and the model—as a kind of block: on the contrary, it is the abolition of second degree thought that breaks out of the vicious infinity of language. In all of these experiences, what seems to be at stake is not to crush language under the mystical silence of the ineffable, but to *measure* it, to arrest that spinning verbal top which powers by its whirling fury the obsessional play of symbolic substitutions. In short, it is the symbol as semantic operation which is under attack.'

To which Burch adds: 'And what could be more acutely inimical to that perfect example of the compulsive production of meaning supplied by the Hollywood codes than the blank beauty of an Ozu pillow-shot?'

At which point we have described a full circle—from Richie's assertion that the 'carefulness' of an Ozu composition can be 'obtrusive' or become 'obsessive' to the statements of Barthes and Burch, which imply that it can *suspend* an 'obsessional play of symbolic substitutions' and a 'compulsive production of meaning' . . . Whether one chooses to agree with all the ideological ramifications of Burch's position is, of course, another matter; but it is worth noting that his specific analyses have some expositional value apart from their polemical context, and it is hardly essential to 'agree with' every one of his conclusions in order to learn something from his arguments.

At the same time, his definition of what constitutes Ozu's 'mature' work—a 'penchant for strict formalisation [in *I Was Born, But . . ., Passing Fancy* and *Tokyo Chorus*] which will lead first to the unparalleled beauty of the later thirties and early forties [in *A Story of Floating Weeds, An Inn at Tokyo, The Only Son, Brothers and Sisters of The Toda Family* and *There Was a Father*], and then, through a gradual fossilisation, to the academic rigidity of the post-war period'—deserves some serious consideration, particularly in relation to the relative importance accorded by Richie and other critics to the postwar work (*Late Spring, Tokyo Story, An Autumn Afternoon*, etc.). The latter view, which tends to value Ozu more for 'transcendental' qualities and an austerity or 'purity' of means, effectively regards most of the early films as stepping stones toward these late 'testament' works. Burch's non-illusionist and formalist view places greater value on the 'threshold points' of Ozu's purification of style—e.g., when his use of camera movements became dictated by 'organisational' strategies and *before* he virtually eliminated them, or when he belatedly took up sound and experimented with its possibilities (in *The Only Son*) before using it more conventionally. (One could add the tentative hypothesis that Ozu's first use of colour, in *Equinox Flower*, was more adventuresome than in his subsequent films.)

As most of my own recent viewing of Ozu's work has been concentrated on the pre-war period, I find it difficult to make a choice myself out of anything more than memory or hearsay, although theoretically at least, Burch's preferences appear somewhat more persuasive. This became especially evident when I had occasion to see *Woman of Tokyo* twice, roughly three months apart: initially after reading Richie, and subsequently after reading Burch. The first time, it seemed like little more than a perfunctory potboiler in relation to *Days of Youth* (which was screened just before), unaffecting and remote—as Richie puts it, 'Another romantic melodrama, this one a quickie.' I was persuaded, too, by Richie's arguments about the 'weakness' of certain transitional devices, such as a cut from a clock in a room which the brother's fiancée has just left to answer a phone to a wall full of clocks in a shop where the fiancée is receiving the call: 'One feels at once that the call from the clock shop is only a flimsy pretext for the clock transition.'

Yet seen again, in the light of Burch's analysis, a number of things about the film became apparent. The discontinuity of certain cuts (including those involving the steaming teapot), the 'unmotivated' dolly at the end and the fancy clock transition—along with a great deal more—became part and parcel of a *distanciation* from the characters, to a degree quite unusual for Ozu at that period, that suddenly brought the film beautifully to 'life'. What originally had served as a stumbling block—Ozu's pronounced formalisation of shots and movements which repeatedly 'abstracted' the plot from any possibility of sustained identification—gradually became a lever into something quite different: not merely what the characters were saying and doing, but what Ozu was 'saying' and doing through them, which, far from conveying remoteness, constituted a very special kind of intimacy.

Obviously we all have a lot further to go before we can begin to understand what Ozu is about; a full-scale Ozu season that is currently being planned at the National Film Theatre will hopefully be a step on the way. A great deal remains to be deciphered and penetrated, on a sheer textual level as well as theoretically. (What, for instance, is the meaning of the fireworks displays that momentarily punctuate the narratives of *Passing Fancy* and *An Inn at Tokyo*?) Quite a bit more remains to be enjoyed: the extraordinary physicality and expressiveness of father and son in *Passing Fancy*; the extended song sequence in *The Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947); the short dollies through an empty Noh theatre in *Early Summer*. But in the meantime, a lot will be gained when critics like Richie—already so useful for their arsenal of background and biographical information—begin to sharpen up their critical methodologies as well. ■

'Shots without human presences . . .' 'An Autumn Afternoon'

The set of 'Don Quintin El Amargao', designed by José Maria Torres

BUÑUEL, SÁENZ DE HEREDIA AND FILMÓFONO

Roger Mortimore

Luis Buñuel has always been reluctant to acknowledge publicly the extent of his involvement in the making of four films in Spain during 1935 and 1936—*Don Quintin El Amargao*, *La Hija de Juan Simón*, *Quién Me Quiere a Mi?* and *Centinela, Alerta!*. As he said in a famous interview with André Bazin and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze (*Cahiers du Cinéma*, June 1954): 'Then I began to produce some films in collaboration with a friend of mine, Ricardo Urgoiti. There were four of them; they were of no interest at all, and I can't even remember their titles. Then the Spanish Civil War broke out.'

Ricardo Urgoiti founded Filmófono in 1929. He already owned a radio station, Union Radio, founded in 1925, and now he wanted to take advantage of the changes in the structure of the cinema that he saw would come with the advent of sound. Filmófono was created to import and distribute foreign films of quality. Thus Soviet classics and the films of Pabst were shown in Spain for the first time during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Urgoiti had a representative in Paris, Juan Piqueras, who advised him and made arrangements with French distributors.

Shortly after founding Filmófono, Urgoiti became director of the best circuit of cinemas in Madrid. Apart from giving prominence to the films he imported, this enabled him to improve the standard of films shown in Spain and thus partake in the process of popular education. (This was not dissimilar to the work of his father who, in 1917, had founded the liberal newspaper *El Sol*, whose regular contributors included Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset, Maeztu and Pérez de Ayala, people who believed in the cultural regeneration of Spain.) Urgoiti also became the Spanish distributor for Walt Disney when he accidentally met, in Paris in 1929, a Disney representative who had, incredibly, found no buyers in Spain Enrique Herreros, the collagist and cartoonist in charge of Filmófono's publicity, recalls that the Disney cartoons were put at the end of the programme, after the main film, because of their artistic quality. Thus the *Silly Symphonies* and the early adventures of Mickey Mouse helped to subsidise the Soviet films which had lost Urgoiti money. Urgoiti also began to recoup with *Sous les Toits de Paris* and *Le Million*, but *A Nous la Liberté* and *Le Quatorze Juillet*, which cost more to import than the earlier Clair films, were less lucrative. So in 1935 Urgoiti decided to subsidise his quality imports by producing films himself. These films, which would have to be made as cheaply as possible, would be unashamedly popular; but Urgoiti still hoped to achieve a balance between the commercial and the artistically worthwhile.

The problem was to find a professional director; for, before the Civil War, most Spanish directors were *aficionados* allowed by producers' money to learn how to direct. The exceptions were Buñuel, Benito Perojo and Florian Rey; Perojo and Rey had worked at the Paramount Studios at Joinville and Perojo had made a film in Hollywood. The cohesiveness of Spanish intellectual life at this time, arising out of the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid that had brought together Lorca, Dalí and Buñuel and which played a fundamental part in the formation of the Generation of '27, meant that Buñuel and Urgoiti, both born in 1900, had numerous mutual friends. They had met in connection with the activities of the Cineclub Español, the first in Spain, founded by Ernesto Giménez Caballero, admirer of Mussolini and editor of *La Gaceta Literaria* (which published poems and articles by Buñuel); and also in connection with Proa Filmófono, the club created within the Filmófono organisation for films unsuited to commercial exploitation. And it had been Urgoiti who had loaned the cinema for the first, and for a long time the only, showing in Spain of *L'Age d'Or*.

Buñuel was working for Warner Brothers in Madrid, supervising dubbing and co-productions. He said that he would be pleased to help Urgoiti make these films but imposed an essential condition, absolute anonymity. If his name appeared in the credits as director, he would leave Urgoiti in the lurch. This meant that someone would have to be found to be the signing director. Buñuel insisted upon anonymity, as both Urgoiti and Sáenz de Heredia assert, because he did not want to compromise his *avant-garde* reputation. However, in 1932 Buñuel had become disillusioned with the Surrealists because of their contempt for ordinary people; *Land Without Bread*, banned by successive Republican governments after one semi-private showing in Madrid, had been a response to this. Buñuel had been concerned for some time, in fact, with trying to reach a wider audience. He had received offers to make commercial films in France after *L'Age d'Or*, but had refused because the subjects were not congenial. Now he had an opportunity to improve the standard of production in Spain and to reach a popular audience, although he saw that his presence in the credits as director would hazard the films' popular success. Also, this was during the *bienio negro*, the two-year period of right-wing government, that included the revolution in Asturias in October 1934, by Lerroux and the C.E.D.A. (the Catholic party), with whom Buñuel was *persona non grata*; he may have feared censorship problems if his name appeared as director.

The first Filmófono production was *Don Quintín El Amargao* ('Embittered Don Quintín'), based on a *sainete* or farce by Arniches, the Spanish equivalent of Feydeau. The nominal director was Luis Marquina, hitherto a sound engineer. According to Urgoiti, Marquina was responsible for some details, but mainly he was carrying out Buñuel's orders. The script was by Buñuel and Eduardo Ugarte, co-director of La Barraca, the travelling drama group founded and directed by Federico García Lorca. Prevailing unprofessional conditions in the studios, with actors arriving on the set at different times so that shooting often had to continue until the early hours, were changed by Buñuel. Officially the Executive Producer of these films, he established a working day of eight hours, with fixed breaks for meals, and insisted on punctuality. The cast went through a scene once on the set before

filming, and fidelity to the script, not common then, was insisted upon. Each scene was allowed only one take.

In this way Buñuel saved Urgoiti's money, even giving him back part of the absurdly low budget, and began to develop the efficiency of a technical crew that remained unchanged for the subsequent films; given the lack of specialisation in the Spanish film industry at this time, Buñuel had to teach everyone. Buñuel's procedures evoked amazement in the C.E.A. Studios at Ciudad Lineal, on the periphery of Madrid, where he was to return for *Viridiana*; yet within a month the film was finished. It opened in one of the smartest cinemas in Madrid's Gran Via, the Palacio de la Música, controlled of course by Urgoiti, on October 3rd, 1935, the month that Gil Robles had his legendary interview with Sternberg when the Spanish government asked Paramount to withdraw *The Devil is a Woman* from world circulation, regarding a scene where a Civil Guard drinks in a public café as an insult to the Spanish armed forces. It was also the month that the government of Lerroux fell because of the *estraperlo* scandal.

Billed by Herreros as 'a Film from Madrid with the Rhythm of Hollywood', *Don Quintín El Amargao* achieved both critical and popular success. Critics praised the reconstruction of a street, and a sequence in the middle of the film featuring the title song; here the effect had been obtained by skilful editing which had to take the place of cranes, still unknown in Spanish studios. The script, as Francisco Aranda quotes in his essential *Luis Buñuel, biografía crítica* (Barcelona, 1970), betrays the work of someone conversant with Soviet films, as in the following extract:

> SHOT 14: Maria sits down on a public bench. Near her a workman is eating from his lunch can. She eyes it hungrily.
> SHOT 15: A queue of beggars at a public soup kitchen. Maria is the third. All except her have a bowl. It is her turn. The man giving out the food says: 'Where's your bowl?'—'I haven't got one.'—'No bowl, no food. Wake your ideas up or you'll die. Next!' He serves the next in the queue.
> SHOT 16: A street. Maria is begging.
> SHOT 17: The outside of a night-club.
> SHOT 18: Dissolve into the interior. The gaming room. Customers engrossed in gambling at a table. The croupier calls: '29. Red. Nothing. *Next*!'

The second Filmófono production was *La Hija de Juan Simón* ('Juan Simon's Daughter'), based on a popular play which in turn was based on a song, with lyrics by a priest, that the singer 'Angelillo' had made successful throughout Spain. The play's author, Nemesio M. Sobrevila, had written the script, designed the excellent sets and begun to direct. Sobrevila was an architect who had written and directed two *avant-garde* films, *El Sexto Sentido* (1926), a mixture of *Greed*, German Expressionism and low farce, and *Al Hollywood Madrileño* (1927); he was talented, but he lacked experience of working in and organising a studio and had shot only two scenes in a week. Urgoiti and Ugarte begged Buñuel to intervene, which he did, receiving an extra fee for his work as director. He had taken no part in the preparation of this film because of sciatica. Sobrevila, resenting Buñuel's supervision, left, and a week passed without shooting. According to José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, this is what happened:

'I went to the Roptence Studios and had the position explained to me by one of the composers, Remacha. He said that I would be in charge of shooting on the set but that the real director would be Buñuel. I said that I would be pleased to do this because I wanted to learn how to direct, even that I would be prepared to pay for the chance of being allowed to learn. But no, he said, I would be paid. He said they would pay me 1500 pesetas (there were then about 40 pesetas to the £), no more because of the week's delay in shooting. Then he said could I begin shooting that afternoon, and I said that I would have to have a shave first. The first scene I shot was a dance by Carmen Amaya. This took place in a *boîte* behind the Palacio de la Música in Madrid.

'Every day before shooting I would see Buñuel and he would tell me exactly how he wanted each scene shot. I supervised the shooting on the set. In the evening Buñuel saw the takes, and he did all the editing. He also had a hand in the script. Although he didn't interfere in the actual shooting, it was he who made the film.'

José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, a first cousin of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the Falange, was born in 1911. In 1934 he had written and directed his first film, *Patricio miró a una estrella* ('Patricio Looked at a Star'), the first film to be made in the studios owned by Serafín Ballesteros, who was also the cameraman. The film concerns the comic-pathetic adventures of a screen-struck assistant in a haberdashery, to which we are introduced during a sale by a majestic track along the counter that reveals the assistants and the backs of the heads of the women shoppers. Anxious to become an actor, he gets an introduction to a studio but loses his chance by the havoc he causes. Later, a star (Rosita Lacasa) agrees to listen to his audition, and the film ends with Patricio, fitted out with new teeth, making a film as her leading man. Patricio was the first screen role of the stage actor Antonio Vico, who in subsequent roles until the Civil War portrayed a *petit bourgeois* 'little man', a Chaplinesque figure moving through the social strata of the Second Republic, a society as rigidly defined as that in the films of Chaplin or Renoir's *La Règle du Jeu*. Originally the film had a Chaplinesque ending with Patricio returning to the haberdasher's, but returning having earned the respect of his fellow assistants. However, an uncommercial ending to an uncommercial film was regarded as folly by the producers; thus the change.

José Luis Sáenz de Heredia with his crew filming 'Patricio miró a una Estrella'. Below: Manuel Paris, Antonio Vico, Rosita Lacasa in a scene from the film

The film's social concern is echoed in other notable films of the Second Republic, such as *El Malvado Carabel* (Edgar Neville, 1935; also with Vico) and *Barrios Bajos* (Pedro Puche, 1937). It also contains glorious comic scenes, notably Patricio's antics in the studio, where he disturbs a symphony concert and wrecks the shooting of a Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy-type duet on board ship when he appears from behind cardboard rocks up to the knees in water; scenes worthy of the Marx Brothers. As Sáenz de Heredia has said, the film 'showed an awareness of something outside Spain, in Europe, which was rare at that time.' Although it is imitative of Lubitsch and Clair, seen in the context of the bulk of the Spanish cinema of the epoch, the film makes one echo Lorca's comment on Harry d'Abbadie D'Arrast's *La Traviesa Molinera* (1934): 'A film so delightful and beautiful that it doesn't seem Spanish.' *Patricio miró a una estrella* opened in Madrid in April, 1935. It was favourably reviewed, but it ran for only a week. Sáenz de Heredia explains: 'People preferred the *folklórico* (kitsch flamenco).' Four years of the Second Republic had not been enough to Europeanise Spanish popular taste. It was to be a *folklórico* piece that Sáenz de Heredia worked on with Buñuel.

La Hija de Juan Simón was an *españolada*, deriving from Beaumarchais and Merimée, a melodrama of gypsies and flamenco singers, a French view of Spain that had become popular among the Spanish. Herreros launched it thus: '*La Hija de Juan Simón* is like the music of Falla or the *Romancero Gitano* of Lorca: the exaltation and transcendence of popular origins.' According to Aranda, Buñuel did not try to dignify these conventions; rather, he heightened them, for instance asking Carmen Amaya to exaggerate her style of dancing. Buñuel himself appears in a prison scene, the cell walls covered with hammers and sickles, during a vocal number by 'Angelillo'. Urgoiti opened the film on December 16th, 1935, the month of the Nombela affair, a matter of dishonesty in the handling of contracts for army supplies in Morocco that further destroyed the reputation of Lerroux and provoked the twenty-sixth governmental crisis of the Republic. It opened

simultaneously in fourteen cinemas in Madrid, a move which appalled orthodox distributors: for the first time a new film could be seen the same day in a smart cinema and in a cinema in a working class area. The film was extremely popular, the sales of the music alone paying for its making. Critical opinion, however, ignorant of Buñuel's intentions, found it vulgar.

Sáenz de Heredia then made *Quién Me Quiere a Mí?* ('Who Loves Me?'). Urgoiti describes the film as 'not of much interest', made to keep the production team in action because *Centinela, Alerta!* was not yet ready for shooting, and to exploit a child who had just won a radio talent contest. Sáenz de Heredia this time had only slight control from Buñuel (again responsible with Ugarte for the script), who was busy preparing *Centinela, Alerta!*. He had shown his competence in *La Hija de Juan Simón*, and *Quién Me Quiere a Mí?* was shot, in only three weeks, in the Ballesteros Studios. *Centinela, Alerta!*, like *La Hija de Juan Simón*, would be shot in the Roptence Studios.

Quién Me Quiere a Mí? was the first Spanish film to deal with divorce, the Republic's divorce laws having taken effect in January, 1932. The child of the broken marriage was played by Mari-Tere, lauded by Herreros as 'the Spanish Shirley Temple'. The film was felt not to be up to the standard of its predecessors, nor was it as popular. It was the bad luck of *Quién Me Quiere a Mí?* to open on April 11th, 1936, the same day as Florian Rey's *Morena Clara* with Imperio Argentina, the only star the Spanish cinema has ever produced, and the great comic Miguel Ligero. Perhaps with the arrest of Primo de Rivera, the banning of Falange meetings and the shooting of newspaper sellers by rival political groups, the public wished to escape the tensions of everyday life by seeing a dignified Andalusian comedy that included a Busby Berkeley sequence in a courtyard in Seville.

It was against this violent background to the few months of the Popular Front government that Buñuel embarked on what was to be the last Filmófono production, *Centinela, Alerta!* ('Look out, Sentry'), also based on a play by Arniches and again starring 'Angelillo', who here gave his best performance. Buñuel brought his friend Jean Grémillon from Paris to direct. Grémillon had already filmed in Spain in 1934, when he had made *La Dolorosa*, but this was the first time Filmófono had a director with a European reputation in charge of shooting. Thus there was less intervention from Buñuel, whose work on this film Urgoiti has described as being a friendly collaboration with Grémillon. Shooting began in February, 1936, the month of the electoral victory of the Popular Front under Azaña. Yet in no sense can this film, or the others made by Filmófono, be seen as Popular Front films. The making of these in Spain had to wait until after the outbreak of the Civil War, when the C.N.T. produced, out of union dues, *Nuestro Culpable* (Fernando Mignoni, 1937), an anarchist comedy in the style of René Clair. However these Filmófono films, and others produced during the Second Republic, especially during the Civil War, are perhaps the link between the working class toughness of Chaplin and Keaton, René Clair, and Italian neo-realism.

Urgoiti regards *Centinela, Alerta!* as the best of the Filmófono productions, claiming that it was up to European standard. However Grémillon's name was omitted from the credits because Buñuel himself felt that it wasn't up to the level of the French director's reputation. There is also the story that Grémillon insisted that his name be removed from the credits because he resented the excessive interference by Buñuel and felt that he had not directed the film but had merely been a technician; certainly he was not able to alter the script as he had that of *La Dolorosa*. In fact Grémillon fell ill before the completion of shooting, and Buñuel personally took over direction on the set. He and Ugarte dubbed the voices of two roughs making obscene comments from behind bushes when a nude woman goes to bathe in a river.

Buñuel comments in his 'Autobiography': '. . . these films are rather poor if one compares them from the artistic point of view with their American counterparts, although from a moral and intellectual point of view they're not worse than those produced by Hollywood. Our experiment was going marvellously when our work was suddenly interrupted by the Civil War, July 18th, 1936.' *Centinela, Alerta!* was completed, according to Urgoiti, exactly as the Civil War began; Buñuel and Grémillon left for Paris shortly afterwards. It was not shown in Madrid until July 12th, 1937, during the Battle of Brunete. Buñuel had a further Arniches work planned, *El Ultimo Mono*, but it was not possible to begin shooting.

The fact that Filmófono is described by Urgoiti as 'essentially a business venture' should not obscure the significant part it played in the cultural life of the Second Republic. The activities of Filmófono, the films it imported and the films it made, have much in common with La Barraca, the drama group which united the talents of Lorca, Ugarte, painters like Benjamín Palencia, José Caballero and Ponce de Léon; one of the stage hands was Arturo Ruiz-Castillo, the future film director. Similarly, at Filmófono, Urgoiti assembled some notable talents: Orobon Fernandez, the writer, who translated scripts and prepared subtitles; the musicians Fernando Remacha and Julián Bautista; the cameraman José María Beltrán, who accompanied Urgoiti to Argentina after the Civil War where they made two films with 'Angelillo'; Eduardo Maroto, responsible for the editing. Many have acknowledged how much they learned from Buñuel. All formed part of the extraordinary cultural effervescence experienced in Spain during the Second Republic. After July 18th, 1936, the diaspora.

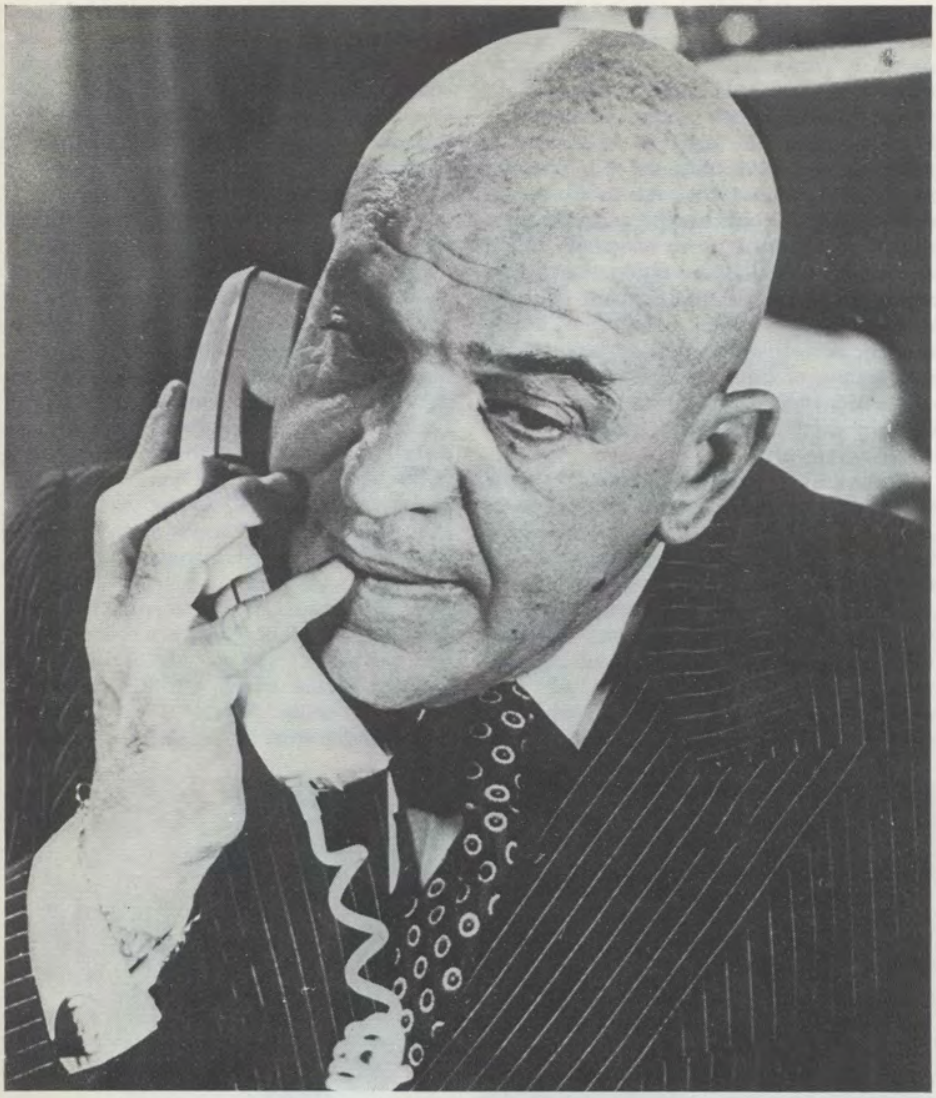
Buñuel's later trajectory is known. Enough to say here that only recently has he been given any official credit inside Spain. There is no mention of Buñuel in the fourteen hundred-odd pages of Fernando Méndez-Leite's semi-official *Historia del Cine Español* (Madrid, 1965). Earlier this year *Un Chien Andalou* was shown for the first time on Spanish television, on the second channel. There were cuts. Yet this is a film that can be seen uncut in cinemas.

But what of Sáenz de Heredia, who has always acknowledged his immense debt to Buñuel, and who has given an idea of the friendship that existed in the Second Republic, irrespective of political affiliations, something else that the Civil War destroyed. 'Buñuel and I became great friends, although our political views were diametrically opposed; I was a Falangist and he was a Communist. We sometimes met in the mornings in the Bakanik, a very smart café, the most right-wing café in Madrid, to discuss politics. Buñuel liked to go there because he said they had the best Scotch in Madrid. In the evening the café was full of fashionable right-wing people.' It was Buñuel who saved Sáenz de Heredia's life, getting him out of the *cheka* and into Nationalist Spain at the start of the war.

In the 1940s Sáenz de Heredia became Spain's leading director, not solely, as has been maliciously suggested, because of his kinship with Primo de Rivera. His first film after the Civil War was a comedy, *A Mí No Me Mire Usted!* (1941); interestingly, the cast includes some of the actors used by Filmófono. But his first notable success was *Raza* (1941), plot by Francisco Franco, which according to Manuel Aznar, 'tries to express through the medium of the cinema the historical continuity of the Spanish people, from the point of view of morality, honour, heroism and sacrifice,' a film obviously modelled on the Triumphalist cinema of Mussolini. Sáenz de Heredia has called his 1940s films 'a cinema for the circumstances.' Paraphrased, that means cinema in a period, 1939 to 1945, when, as Gabriel Jackson has calculated in his *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War*, 200,000 people were killed in Spain. Sáenz de Heredia's later successes included *La Mies es Mucha* (1948), a turgid film that began the fashion for religious movies which plagued the Spanish cinema in the early 1950s. His greatest success after *Raza* was undoubtedly *Franco, Ese Hombre* (1964), a documentary compilation that ends with an interview with Franco, which Sáenz de Heredia is pleased to call 'the only filmed biography of a living head of state, and which ends with the intervention of the protagonist.'

Sadly, there remain traces among Sáenz de Heredia's later work of the promise he showed in his first film, made when he was only twenty-three: *Historias de la Radio* (1955), for example, three comic, realistic sketches which benefit from the presence of the magnificent comic actor José Isbert; even perhaps *Los Gallos de la Madrugada* (1970), despite its obvious alliance with the sub-pornographic genre that has been the staple of the Spanish film industry for the last decade. Sáenz de Heredia's most recent film is called *Solo Ante El Streaking*, the title a pun on the Spanish title of *High Noon*. Perhaps no more was to be expected in a country where, as Ian Gibson has observed in *The Death of Lorca*, 'assassins can hold public office.' As the murder of Lorca is a symbol of the curtailment of the development of Spanish culture between 1898 and 1936, the richest period since the sixteenth century, Sáenz de Heredia's career since 1939 shows the castrating effect on the Spanish cinema of the Nationalist victory, from which it has not yet recovered. ■

This article is dedicated to the memory of Juan Piqueras.

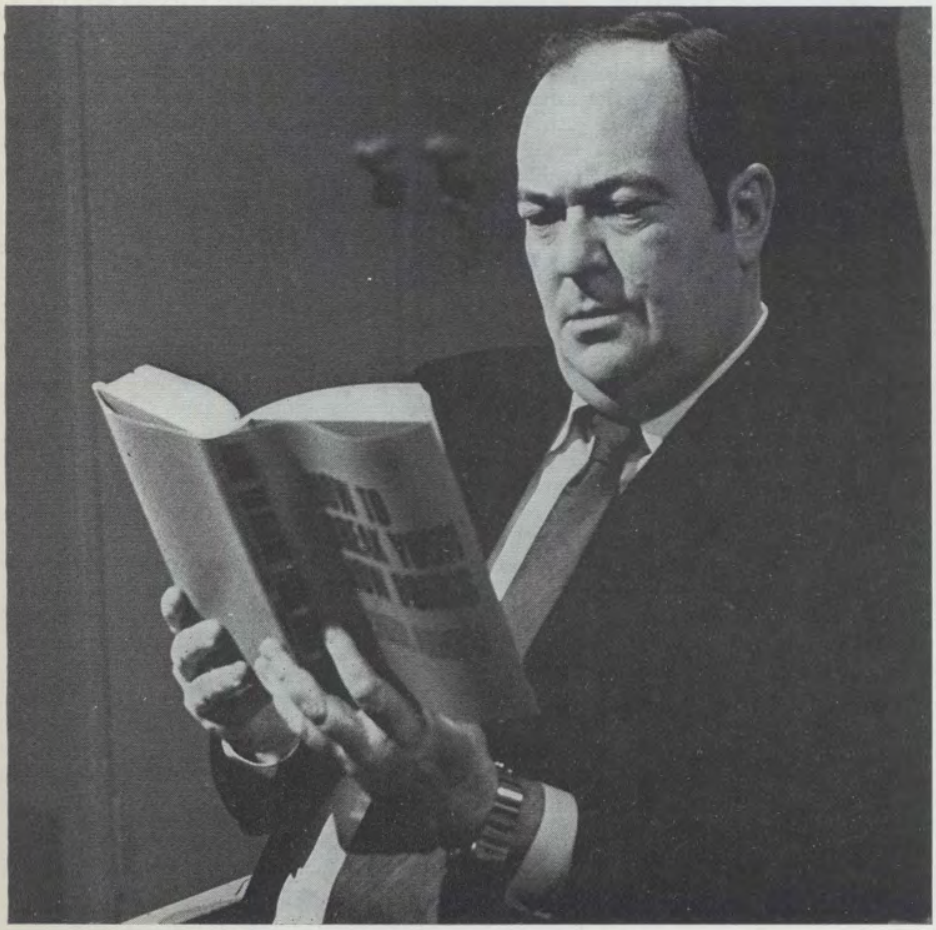


KOJAK AND CO.

Lorna Sage

Crime on TV is ubiquitous, bland and addictive—which makes it, in a sense, very good television. The Mystery Movies and Detectives keep threatening to merge not only into each other, but into the commercials. For example, the ads for chocolate ('And all because the lady loves . . .') or motor oil (chases by car, by boat, by plane) or hair spray (those android heroines with their sculpted coiffures). Watch this slot almost any evening and you are guaranteed a programme casually hinting that the police are harassed, bewildered, or downright vicious in their impotence; that the public are apathetic; that politics or big business are perverting the course of justice—and all with a kind of routine, optimistic gloss that satisfies 'realism' without in the least making sense.

And yet, as connoisseurs of fragile, past cinematic escapisms never tire of saying, our lies are sometimes as revealing as our documentary would-be truths. Especially, perhaps, on television, where the viewer is irritably captive, and watches enough hours to become choosy about which lies to swallow. There are of course two schools of thought on this, as on advertising: the one which says that all commercials condition you to accept all others, and the opposite free enterprise theory which argues that you are being helped to discriminate. Neither, though, quite fits. It is literal-minded to assume that people who find a particular offering feeble or fake switch over to the superior brand. If the programme belongs to a genre (like the cop/private eye series) that they know well, they'll probably watch it, and enjoy seeing through it. It's very seldom that staple TV manages to concentrate or distil things in one programme, or even one series; the way it works is cumulative, diffuse and hesitant, to say nothing of delays and repeats. Popular genres make use of our scepticism and sense of *déjà vu*; the lack of vividness or originality in any one segment simply means that it dies harmlessly into the stereotype as you watch, ashes to ashes.



Starting then at the painless, near-invisible end, *The Rockford Files*, with James Garner as private eye lucky Jim Rockford, was a new series so streamlined that it slotted in smoothly in mid-March on BBC-1 with almost nobody noticing. ITV has several of these U Certificate American shows (grandaddy *Barnaby Jones*, for

'Look for the Ugly': Telly Savalas as Kojak, Stratford Johns as Barlow

instance, played by Buddy Ebsen) which are embarrassingly frank about the fact that they're replacement Westerns—any gestures of sophistication having to do with distance rather than engagement, making up for the disinfectant powers of the open air. *The Rockford Files* is supposed to be a mild send-up, but all it succeeds in revealing is that both producers and viewers have a kind of cynical tolerance for the thinness and disposability of the genre. The vague pretensions to parody really amount to no more than marking down a rather shop-soiled article. You can almost hear the producers wheedling—'So it's not worth your paying enthusiastic attention, but at least give us a contemptuous glance.' It is difficult for an actor to come out of this situation with much dignity: James Garner used to be in *Maverick* and he seems to be fated, so far as his television career goes, to guying the stock heroes. Here, all that's asked of him is a bemused, incredulous air, which must be easy enough faced with scripts of such Gothic implausibility. The first programme in the series was about a man who killed his father for killing his mother, and employed Rockford to track himself down, for example. Though detection is supposed to be what it's all about, story-lines are calculated to discourage enquiry (or even interest) so as to leave plenty of room for the action—the beating-up, the ritual confrontation between private eye and policeman, the car chase and so on.

And in this, the programme isn't parodic at all, any more than Garner's non-acting is parodic. The TV hero is a new breed of actor, a kind of mutant, who carries his image from series to series with only the most perfunctory and mechanical modifications. Past roles, past programmes haunt him, he is the ghost of his former selves. The first episode of *The Rockford Files*, rich in clichés, afforded another example of this, by inviting Roger Davis along to play the part he always plays—the villain who turns out to be a good guy. It's not that he has a special talent for conveying ambiguity, simply that it is always his role. He can currently be seen in BBC-2's repeats of *Alias Smith and Jones* (one of the surviving Westerns and another pseudo-parody) doing just that. Nor does the trail end there: Davis replaced the dead Pete Deuel alias Smith in that series, and by a coincidence that can surely only have been an awful pun in some casting director's head, he appeared along with Deuel's brother Geoffrey in a recent *Ironside* episode ('Once More for Joey') where they both played blind musicians in a plot about pirated pop. It would be hard to find a better instance of the mind-boggling interpenetration of programmes, and the resultant thinness of the actors' fictional identities. (Being blind in the *Ironside* story, of course, enabled both Deuel and Davis to appear even more blank and celluloid.) To talk about crime series as all one is, in this sense, hardly metaphorical: the limbo of 'co-stars' and 'special guests' lends an eery sameness to each 'new' series—what you're seeing are not really actors, or fictional characters, but images, hybrids that are neither one thing nor the other.

Combined with this glossy, stylised texture, however, there is a certain allusion to reality, even in the most doggedly trivial examples. Rockford may be involved in Gothic plots, but the background assumptions that the programme makes about its world touch on a paranoid nerve closer to home: dead daddy's innocent girl friend is merely a trifle piqued to find that he killed his wife; the big boss of a union is outraged to discover that one of his heavies has been taking out contracts to kill on the side. Corruption and indifference are more and more assumed to be endemic—and if one reason for the concentration on mindless action is the supply and demand situation created by television, another is surely that the detective heroes are symbolising a real feeling of impotence. Even the weary conventionality, looked at this way, acquires its own slight significance, reinforcing the sense of insecurity.

And here one gets on to emotional supply and demand, which is what the success of *Kojak* (BBC-1) is about. The most striking aspect of Telly Savalas' portrayal of the tough lieutenant from Manhattan South, more important than his tailoring and his knowingness, is sheer physical self-confidence. He paws everyone, physically and verbally, in a non-stop series of contemptuous caresses ('Baby'), and when no one's in reach he makes greedy, sensual noises with his mouth, or sucks lollipops. His size, his indiscriminate appetite, and his domination of colleagues and criminals alike, make an almost caricatured appeal to every sort of insecurity: he's a father figure out of nightmare, surrounding, oppressive, explicitly brutal and explicitly sentimental, an overbearing grotesque. With such seemingly exhaustless energy at its centre, the series can afford to include more, and take a closer look at the continuous drab flow of violence and waste on the streets. It can also afford to resurrect the old villains (an animal black, a cowardly Jewish rapist) with a cathartic side-swipe at liberal prejudice. *Kojak* rightly has the edge over the other American imports on the market, because its hero conquers indifference. When he hugs friends, or when enemies make him sick, he seems to tease a graspable emotional order out of chaos.

Indeed, Savalas-as-Kojak, again somewhere between fictional character and 'star', has already produced spin-offs, like his non-record 'If', lugubrious and treacly, which topped the hit parade for weeks. When *Top of the Pops* produced a film to go with it, they at least seemed to be calculating that his fans were mostly thirteen or over thirty, and came up with a vignette of a gallant, cuddly, bearish lover. (Which was embarrassing—there was something curiously indecent about Kojak's polymorphous sensuality in a normal sexual situation.) Savalas himself, however, relishes and embellishes the image—'My first two wives still adore me,' he told *Radio Times*, who were impressed enough to make a headline out of it, 'I don't believe in truncating relationships.' His byplay with brother George (Stavros on the show) reinforces the sense of greedy closeness and warmth.

'Kojak' is a one-man institution, in short, overflowing with emotional largesse—and he's as much a mythic defence against the fear that the police are a faceless bureaucratic organisation, as he is against the networks of crime. One episode, 'A Very Deadly Game', illustrated this, fairly directly, in a clash with the FBI over a killer about to buy a heroin shipment: Kojak, appealing to loyalty and revenge ('He killed a cop'), circumvents the Feds' enormous, ineffective intrigues by flying to California (knowing exchanges between New York and LA—'Is he well known to you California folks?'—'Let's just say we've had our vibes') and getting both his man and the heroin which the FBI (who are always phoning Washington) set such propagandist store by. You are meant to feel not only that the large-scale, undercover operations are absurdly inhuman, but also that they don't work, and are just a charade. 'I feel like James Bond,' Kojak moans, watching a Chinese girl arrange the arrival of the shipment from Corsica, and he returns to New York at the end with a puppy for the dead cop's kids, in a shameless gesture of sentiment and relief. Back to the face to face, sticky, touchable world.

Kojak compensates—overcompensates even—for the twin suspicions that the police are impotent and secretly aimless, hamstrung by nebulous political cant. The only way American TV deals fictionally with the doings of the FBI or the CIA, or government agencies, is in the comic fantasy of *The Six Million Dollar Man* (ITV), where Lee Majors (who used to be a two-bit cowpoke in *The Virginian*) plays a robot superman (a bonus from a nasty accident in the space programme) who sorts out would-be political assassins etc. single-handed, with only the help of some elementary special effects. Despite all the hardware, though, some doubts creep in: big Steve's computer brain doesn't tell him who the enemy is, he has to be pointed in the right direction by his faceless boss before he can move in at the speed of sound; and hardly surprisingly the only time he seemed happy this series was with a visiting spacewoman, but she had to leave.

Seasoned idiosyncrasy: Raymond Burr as Ironside, with James Shigeta; right: William Conrad as Cannon, with George Maharis

Mission Impossible (BBC-1), where all practical difficulties are banished by gadgetry and plastic faces, has the same problems. Big Jim gets his assignments from a tape-recorder, and it seems to be getting harder and harder to find scripts with interesting missions, because the only domestic organisation one's allowed to hate is the Mafia, and foreign interference is fraught with such puzzlement (are you overthrowing a dictatorship or preventing a coup?) that the locales have had to become a helpless jumble of South America and the Mystic East. Though it would be quite wrong to allegorise these sincerely mindless series, they do say something about the medium and its myths of power—if only by demonstrating how readily action can be emptied of motive and direction.

Home-grown crime always used to seem much more modest, reliable and realistic than the American shows (rather like British cars). Five years ago, or a bit more, before the BBC sent Barlow off on his own, *Softly, Softly: Task Force* developed an extraordinarily charged atmosphere that had viewers obsessed with the personal and procedural details of its coppers' working lives. The smallest gestures—John Watt's raised eyebrow, Snow's little cough—could signal a major change in tone, a readjustment in the always delicate balance of power. There was a special, puritan pleasure to be got out of such visual minutiae, compared with the numbing assault of elaborately choreographed violence. *How* things got done (the mixture of muddle, paper work, plodding and intuition) became unmysterious, and all the more fascinating for that; you felt the characters knew how crime worked, and that, despite ironies and defeats, they could take themselves seriously. However, though *Z-Cars* continues as always, in a low key, background role, and with an uneasy hint of the public information film (baby battering, squatters, and so on, know your legal rights), *Softly, Softly: Task Force* and *Barlow* have lost the peculiar chemistry that used to be so convincing. They are beginning to be haunted by the same creeping sense of unreality and insecurity that informs the over-exposed American series.

The producer of *Barlow*, Keith Williams, commenting on the change of direction early this year, said, 'The series is no longer how the police operate but what being a policeman is all about. Not so much how it's done, but why.' But Barlow, enmeshed in the secretive Whitehall machine he now works for, has never seemed less sure of what being a policeman is all about: he has become a kind of agent, less original and less responsible than he was, never knowing the full implications of his actions, nor their exact purpose. Stratford Johns gets what change he can out of bullying, cajoling encounters with the smooth go-between A. G. Fenton (played by Neil Stacy), but dramatically (as well as narratively) it's not much. Whether the plot concerns bullion smuggling or political asylum, the under-plot is always the same—the frustrating discovery that for reasons of security, or diplomacy, or simply not offending influential people, investigations can never reach a conclusion. The writers have played up the irony, of course, but they haven't found a way of rewriting Barlow, who is the shadow of his former self. The main effect, intentionally or not, is to imply that the closer you get to the processes of government and high finance, the more it looks like an impersonal game which makes nonsense of individual effort or passion or integrity. And as for 'why', being a policeman on this view is being a pawn who can never answer that question.

All this takes *Barlow* (who would have thought it?) very close to the paranoid conventions of *Spy Trap* (also BBC-1) where you're never sure who's working for whom, or whether it even matters in the long run. Paul Daneman (Cdr. Ryan) and Tom Adams (Major Sullivan) go through their lines with a kind of knowing blankness, and their confrontations with their bowler-hatted boss Carson (played by Michael Gwynn) are only less irritating than parallel scenes in *Barlow* because they're more stylised. The opening sequence of the first programme of the latest series will illustrate the arid, self-conscious irony that characterises *Spy Trap*: first a trout swimming in a stream; cut to a plane landing, watched by a spy; the spy and Stanstead Airport reflected in Sullivan's dark glasses; Ryan fishing, and Carson appearing like a genie to summon him to work; more spies recognising each other at Stanstead; finally, Carson and his Russian opposite number having dinner together, where it transpires that perhaps the Russian meant his man to be recognised, as a way of opening the conversation . . . I may have missed out a few stages, but the main point, of course, was self-parody, the action at the airport being unreal spy stuff, mirrored in the fancy cutting. Depressing games.

That particular programme's theme also has some relevance to the plight of the detectives: 'Look for the Ugly', the ideal agent being a man distorted and dislocated in some way, so alienated from others and from himself that he will relish the ironic appropriateness of the role of pawn. But though, as everyone has remarked, the present generation of TV detectives is remarkably 'ugly' (obese Cannon, Harry O with his bad back, paralysed Ironside, to say nothing of Barlow or Kojak), this paranoid interpretation of their role is something none of them will finally admit. Rather, their ugliness is meant to be a form of exaggerated individualisation, the seasoned idiosyncrasy of someone self-defined and painfully self-sustaining, set against indifference and anonymity. They increasingly resemble special agents, private eyes (and, indeed, villains) because the threat is more and more felt to come from the organisations 'behind' them. Simply in terms of the medium, television, too, the pressures towards uniformity are great: the staple genre (which this has become) uses up its actors' plausibility, fixing their image (witness Barlow, or the recent flop of Ironside in America) and endlessly demanding something more, something 'new'.

ITV has proved much better at providing the new dubious heroes than the BBC. Not being stuck with a formula must have something to do with it; perhaps, also, not being stuck with Mrs. Whitehouse. ITV's *Public Eye* (Thames) and *The Sweeney* (Thames) are nastily, stubbornly alive, whereas the BBC's response to demand *You're on Your Own* has a stiff, grudging air about it (you mustn't have too much of this, it isn't good for you). Typically, the series title is a self-conscious one, but self-consciousness (witness *Barlow*) is not the same as doing something different. Ryder, played by Denis Quilley, clings to an institutional notion of integrity left over from the *Softly, Softly* days: he has resigned from the police because of rumours of corruption, of which he was entirely innocent, and though he is supposed to live now in the world of Soho drinking clubs and so on, you never believe it. Vice—or even ambiguous pleasure—only impinges on him in the form of isolated incidents, not as the atmosphere he breathes. He wears a look of injured innocence, and it's hard to imagine him surviving the six weeks the programme runs. He is a one-man institution in a sense quite opposite to Kojak—not taking over and personalising the institution, but meekly impersonating it in its absence.

'Home-grown crime always used to seem more modest . . .': Stratford Johns and David Dodimead in 'Barlow'; right: David Lloyd Meredith in 'Softly, Softly'

In convincing contrast, Inspector Regan of *The Sweeney*, played by John Thaw, is a man of easy virtue. The series reflects the same topical concern (corruption in the Metropolitan Police) but without the queasiness: Regan's unbuttoned, edgy, disorderly life style makes sense as a response both to his criminal clients and to the cautious, desk-bound, sneering Chief Inspector Haskins (Garfield Morgan) back at the office. Vulnerable on all sides, Regan lives in a welter of elation, self-pity, opportunism; he lives on his appetites with a new literalness (for a TV policeman) so that he doesn't just drink, he gets drunk, and he doesn't flirt stoically with women who fancy him, but ends up in bed. His claim to heroism lies in the combination of callous self-confidence and continuous insecurity, and he's surely the shape of television detectives to come. He's dispensable, and he knows it.

■

Film REVIEWS

Stavisky. . .

At times, with Belmondo raffishly donning a false moustache and sneaking through nocturnal streets to a secret lair worthy of Fantômas, *Stavisky . . .* (Gala) looks suspiciously like one of those adventures of Harry Dickson that never were. Certainly Jean Ray's great detective, whose ambience is evoked by the lurid cover of a copy of *Le Petit Journal Illustré* bandied about as evidence of Stavisky's past as a conman, would have made short work of the clues (or coincidences) left lying about for our edification.

Take, for instance, the blood motif. Discounting the drops which fall from Stavisky's gashed hand on to his wife Arlette's ermine fur as a symbolic fulfilment of her dream of disaster, there is most notably the red stain of wine spilt by Arlette when he is first arrested, later echoed by the bloodstained floor featured in the cover illustration of the copy of *Le Crapouillot* lying in his office. Not entirely unconnected with the fact that the magazine is a special number devoted to 'Morts mystérieuses', these two stains ultimately point accusingly to the blood on the bedspread behind Stavisky's body, which lies neatly (too neatly) stretched on the floor parallel to the bed, as inexplicably being on the wrong side of the body from the wound.

Always discreet—he might well have offered a more conclusive clue to the 'suicide' by quoting the official police report which stated that Stavisky fired *two* bullets into his temple——Alain Resnais here remains exceptionally aloof and allusive. And although *Stavisky. . .* has scraped by critically on the strength of its glittering evocation of the Thirties, complete with nostalgic Sondheim score and echoes of *Marienbad* in Arlette's poses, it seems to have been as little understood as *Muriel* was eleven years ago. All too often, even while acknowledging the parallels suggested by intercutting Trotsky's car and Stavisky's lift—one exile stagnating as the other fluctuates with a brilliant coup in the balance—critics have held Trotsky's presence in the film to be opportunistic and irrelevant. It is, on the contrary, absolutely central.

Granville (Trotsky's omnipresent young admirer, played by Jacques Spiesser) draws most of the connections in his speech just before the end, commenting on the expulsion of Trotsky: 'But it's in France that the battle against Fascism will be decided. Trotsky won't be here. Without him we'll disintegrate. And to think Stavisky did this. But for Stavisky, February 6th wouldn't have happened; but for the Fascist riots of February 6th which brought Daladier's resignation, there'd be no centre government; but for the centre government, there'd be no expulsion of Trotsky'.

To the casual ear this may sound like just another Leftist bleat provoked by hero-worship of Trotsky, but in fact it isn't. 'February 6th' was a full-scale attempt at an extremist coup in Paris in 1934, spearheaded by the monarchist-fascist *Action Française* (Baron Raoul's favourite paper and political league), which so scared the Left that it led to the last-ditch bastion of the Popular Front, a leftist alliance so vacillating that its collapse was only a matter of time. Very relevantly in terms of the film, the coup was sparked by the Radical premier Daladier's decision to dismiss the director of the Comedie Française on the grounds that his production of *Coriolanus* was an incitement to fascist demonstration. Equally relevantly, Daladier had just before this dismissed Jean Chiappe, the notoriously extremist Prefect of Police, who was subsequently supposed to have instigated the coup in revenge. The name of Chiappe, who had already won himself a place in film history by banning *L'Age d'Or*, is cited in *Stavisky . . .* as that of the police chief who tried to protect Stavisky by having Inspector Bonny (Claude Rich) taken off the case. And Bonny, in case anyone gets the idea that any policeman is the good guy in this story, survived the Stavisky affair only to be dismissed the following year and turn up during World War Two as the *eminence grise* of the French Gestapo.

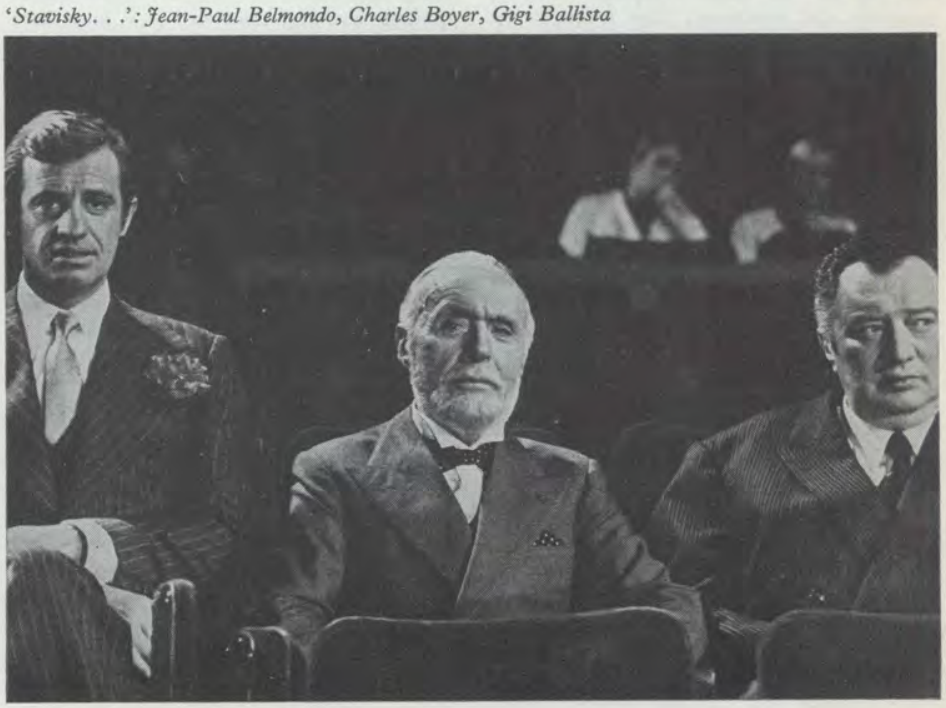
For all the disclaimer at the beginning of the film, *Stavisky . . .* is an historical document whose myriad, elusive facts are given a pattern by being viewed through the kaleidoscope of a largely imagined character. (In case any doubt lingers that this is primarily a fictional character, Resnais dispels it with a direct quotation from Lubitsch's *Trouble in Paradise*—the track along the façade of Arlette's mansion—another tale of the fatal love of a confidence trickster.) But the patently fictional nature of the character also serves to focus the truth of the society which he manipulates or is manipulated by. In describing his initial discussions with Jorge Semprun about the film, Resnais referred to a visit to the Musée Grévin at the age of twelve when Stavisky struck him as a sort of Robin Hood figure, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. Vestiges of this view of Stavisky as a Leftist folk hero remain—when he rehearses his impassioned speech about his cure-all for the Depression, or when he stubs out his cigar in a plate of raspberries and cream on realising that Montalvo would not be averse to civil war in Spain—but they are used less to exculpate Stavisky than to indict the corrupt decadence of a society in which, temporarily facing each other from opposite sides of the fence, Stavisky and Bonny agree that you play with the party that pays the best. Seen emerging like a watermark beneath the veneer of gaiety and opulence—the Thirties as they liked to think of themselves rather than as they were—one finds the bankrupt society excoriated so mercilessly in *La Règle du Jeu*.

Our two interlocutors in the theatrical metaphor that extends through the film are Granville and Baron Raoul (Charles Boyer). Each offers a privileged moment when we can use opera glasses to see more clearly: Granville when a motor launch heralds Trotsky's arrival in France; the Baron when Arlette rejects Montalvo's advances by declaring her absolute fidelity to Stavisky. The qualitative difference in these two moments—one political history, one purely personal—is symptomatic. Granville, vainly trying to impose his political analysis of the dangers attendant upon the French Left's suicidal weakness in isolating Trotsky as a potential trouble-maker, is on the outside looking in. The Baron, on the other hand, is an intimate friend, a confidant, channelling our willing imagination into the fascinating byways of Stavisky's life.

This life, staged as a sort of *Citizen Kane* investigation of a citizen under suspicion, and ending with a magnificent theatrical coup as Stavisky's 'bought' member of parliament erupts on to the stage of the Empire to announce the finale ('C'est fini, Alexandre; on tire le rideau'), is an extended charade in which we are invited to guess the secret being spelled out. Various hypotheses are put forward—Stavisky's extravagance, his obsession with women, his megalomania, his guilt complex over his father's suicide—but none of them quite holds water in Stavisky's presence; and all the protagonists are busily playing roles in an attempt to save themselves from going under in the wake of Stavisky's criminal activities.

Meanwhile, the real dramatic confrontation is revealed in two sideshows. First, the extract from Giraudoux' *Intermezzo* which gives Stavisky 'his greatest role' as the Spectre and also completes his identification with that other

'Stavisky. . .': Jean-Paul Belmondo, Charles Boyer, Gigi Ballista



ghost, Trotsky. Second, the extract from *Coriolanus* which defines the interests which demand that these two ghosts be sent back to the other world. Chillingly plausible and persuasive in the person of the Baron, these interests—the anti-semitic extremism of *L'Action Française*, soon to develop into the fascism which made France roll over paws in air as Hitler invaded—end the film with a suave disclaimer. 'He was my friend,' says the Baron of Stavisky the Jew. 'I didn't know . . .' he maintains of Stavisky the subversive. This sting in the film's tail is given a little extra venom by the furtive exchange of glances while awaiting interrogation between the Baron and Laloy (the man who abandoned Stavisky to the tender mercies of the police in the chalet), which suggests that the Baron had more to do with Stavisky being 'suicided' than anybody is saying.

The trick whereby Trotsky and Stavisky are identified politically may be a piece of theatrical sleight-of-hand, but it is justified by yet another strand in the web, suggested by Granville when he comments that Trotsky's life in exile is like a Dostoievsky novel. Aptly defining what Granville sees as the hopeless futility of the Leftist battle in which one must nevertheless continue to fight ('Nothing is predetermined'), the Dostoievskian reference is even more applicable to Stavisky. It suggests a sort of dark night of the soul in which his impulses to reject the allies he has chosen—his quizzical challenging of the Baron's adherence to *L'Action Française*, or Montalvo's involvement with Mussolini in his Spanish coup—are channelled by his encounter with the Jewish actress into a sort of death wish through which he might at last rediscover and express himself. Stavisky may have been 'suicided', but he equally certainly committed suicide by refusing to run away. And his death in the film is seen as the suicide of French society five years before it performed its *danse macabre* on its own grave in *La Règle du Jeu*. As the Baron says, formulating his own obituary in a moment of wry lucidity: 'I realised too late that Stavisky was a herald of death . . . not only his, not only of those February days, but the death of an era.'

TOM MILNE

'The Godfather Part II': John Cazale, Al Pacino

The Godfather Part II

'I believe in America,' declares an undertaker in portentous close-up at the start of *The Godfather*, appealing to Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando) to dispatch an act of vengeance on his behalf. The sequel begins and ends with close-ups of Michael (Al Pacino), Vito's youngest son and successor: in the first his hand is being kissed off-screen by yet another supplicant; in the last he sits alone biting his knuckle, with his wedding ring clearly in evidence—an apt symbol of his solitary dominion, with the Corleone family virtually destroyed so that its hollow emblems and relics might be preserved. The most obvious achievement of *The Godfather Part II* (CIC) over its predecessor can be seen in the quiet authority of this framing device, which tells us everything we need to know about the fate of the Corleones without recourse to rhetorical hectoring; its most obvious limitation is that it essentially tells us nothing new.

Perhaps more than anyone else in Hollywood, Francis Ford Coppola epitomises the man in the middle. Attempting to straddle the possibilities of popular appeal and private ambition with his persistent twin themes of guilt and fulfilment, he embarks on a complexity of converging and diverging purposes that can only register on the screen as ambiguity about the relative importance accorded to meanings and effects, the 'personal' statement versus the more impersonal blockbuster. The box-office killing of *The Godfather*, unparalleled in the history of movies, gave him the power and freedom to make *The Conversation*, a resounding commercial flop and his most interesting film to date. *Part II* situates itself somewhere between these extremes, in aim as well as impact—more subtle in its effects than Part I and less strident about its meanings, yet without that unity of effect and meaning which made *The Conversation* a more provocative and cohesive work. Coppola has recently (in *Positif* No. 161) compared himself to Michael Corleone, which does help to signal his personal involvement in the project. Much as Vito's heir apparent manages to bring a touch of class to the family business, Coppola is clearly seeking in the follow-up to make something rather less vulgar out of the Corleone saga. (His eventual aim to screen both parts together as a single 378-minute film will undoubtedly amplify the function and resonance of many scenes in relation to the overall design.)

Focusing its attention on events which precede and follow the more compressed action of the earlier film—Vito's epochal arrival in America at the turn of the century (with epochal images of the Statue of Liberty appearing at every turn) after his family is destroyed in a Sicilian vendetta, and his early forays into crime as a young man (Robert DeNiro) in New York; the more desperate and destructive criminal machinations of Michael nearly half a century later—*Part II* is more reflective, less obviously violent and sordid in its details. But it is worth noting that a key aspect of Coppola's approach in both parts is to differentiate between two kinds of murder in terms of presentation and audience identification. In the first part, Brando is maintained as a figurehead of integrity in contrast to the hot-headed manoeuvres of Sonny (James Caan) and the various henchmen who either provoke or carry out the family's dirty work, an impression fostered by the expediency of keeping Brando mute and invalid for much of the film's running time, until he retires to enjoy the serenity of his old age; thus virtually all the violence can attract the audience's emotional participation without threatening the heroic resonance of the father figure. In *Part II*, the two murders committed by DeNiro—of Fanucci, a boss ruling the New York immigrant community, and of the Sicilian chieftain who previously wiped out his family—are so carefully motivated and prepared for that they are clearly designed to solicit an audience's approval, while the more questionably motivated killings ordered by Michael are presented so elliptically that any sort of identification with them becomes impossible.

With father and son linked through dissolves that underline their paternal emotions, a contrast between their successive styles and methods as patriarchal criminals is implied throughout. To get the full measure of this distinction, Coppola invests his New York immigrant setting with a wonderful period imagination, combining historical conviction and fairy-tale ambience in darkly-lit brown and muddy sepia tones, and supplies in the figure of Fanucci (Gaston Moschin) a white-suited villain straight out of comic opera and Victorian melodrama. Against a frankly romantic and idealised treatment of Vito as loving father, thoughtful neighbour and Robin Hood of crime are set the more convoluted, less 'justifiable' homicides and transactions of Michael—mainly efforts to salvage a crumbling empire and gratuitously settle up scores, with strategies usually left more in the dark. A laboured attempt is made to link his movements in the late Fifties and early Sixties with contemporary history, so that the sealing of a massive business deal in Havana is promptly interrupted by the Cuban revolution breaking out in the nick of time (although not before Coppola has had the fun of reconstructing a brassy Batista-period nightclub for one brief sequence).

Even at its best, *Part II* suggests a salvaging operation of its own that refines many elements in the saga without substantially altering a duplicitous position in relation to its gallery of sacred monsters, apart from the distinctions outlined above. While the first *Godfather* gathered up all its elements in a continuous narrative sweep, the magisterial pace of the sequel—disrupted somewhat by the parallel construction of the plot—begins to flag about halfway through, regaining its strength only through isolated episodes. But the performances establish continuities of their own, and the acting throughout sustains a much higher level of assurance: Pacino in a cold delineation of Michael's tight-lipped calcification, which verges on hysteria only when he discovers that his wife Kay has deliberately aborted their second son; DeNiro confidently pursuing a part rendered almost exclusively in subtitled Italian; John Cazale as Fredo—the weaker brother who betrays Michael, and is pointlessly shot at his behest in the final series of revenge killings—

'Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore': Ellen Burstyn

suggesting depths that remained untouched in the first part; and Lee Strasberg as the Miami gangster Hyman Roth, offering his former Actors' Studio pupil Brando a veritable lesson in how to bring humanity to an ageing gang boss without mannerist trimmings or masquerades. Similarly, the opening party sequence at Lake Tahoe easily surpasses its counterpart in Part I in economy, choice of detail and sheer spectacle, leading one to speculate on what might have resulted had Coppola directed has own *Gatsby* script.

The identification of the Corleones with America and Catholicism remains as strong as ever, and if no fresh changes are rung on the theme, there is none of the blatant editorialising that marred the original; at most, Coppola will cut from Vito's smoking gun after the murder of Fanucci to fireworks in a San Gennaro festival Rather more dubious—and alas, quite characteristic of the film's monument-building methods—is the use of Nino Rota's ubiquitous *Godfather* waltz theme on the church organ during the communion of Michael's son. Admittedly this provides an effective bridge of emotional continuity, unobtrusively linking up the blood ties of Mafia, family and religion; but at the same time, it poses the uncomfortable suggestion that all three institutions are the exclusive property of Coppola's production company and Paramount.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore

Mean Streets opened with a home movie of a christening performed within the context of the San Gennaro Festival in New York's Little Italy. Dwarfed in the centre of the big screen, those 16mm. images suddenly blew up to occupy the entire screen area, an ominous portent of the way both religion and family (in the full Mafia sense) would loom so decisively over young Charlie's ineffectual attempts to break away and live his own life.

In *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (Columbia-Warner), Martin Scorsese uses precisely the same trick in reverse, with a rose-tinted flashback to Alice's childhood in Monterey suddenly shrinking to the size of a postage stamp, hovering momentarily, and vanishing as we cut to Alice (Ellen Burstyn) twenty-seven years later. As she embarks on her odyssey—left penniless and disoriented by the death of her husband, she sets out with her 12-year-old son, determined to resume her former embryo career as a singer and earn her passage back to the town where she was happy once—Monterey begins to loom like El Dorado: 'But when we get to Monterey, things'll get better.' Not surprisingly, she discovers happiness elsewhere and never makes it. Nostalgia, as that vanishing image suggested, hasn't quite the same *droit de seigneur* as the Church or the Mafia.

It's a nice, clear-cut theme, but not nearly so simple as attempts to tidy the film away as lightweight comedy or a jump on the Women's Lib bandwagon might suggest. To begin with, Alice's nostalgia for Monterey is clearly phoney, a carefully built up defence mechanism; and as the film progresses, the change we watch Alice undergo is extraordinarily rich and complex as her illusions are peeled away like so many onion skins by her exposure to the world, and as each new experience forces her to look at things—people, marriage, love, Women's Lib, even her own son—with new eyes and without preconceptions.

Appropriately enough, since they play characters so important that they should really be included in the cast list, the songs are used to define the nature and extent of Alice's self-deceit. In the opening flashback, a classic piece of kitsch derived in equal parts from Christmas card sentimentality, John Ford nostalgia and *The Wizard of Oz*, an old man silently feeds his chickens in the yard, Alice's parents are glimpsed as reassuring shadows behind the drawn blinds of the family mansion, and 8-year-old Alice herself, a picture of innocence as she wanders the garden in a white dress, launches into 'You'll Never Know', that plaintive number with which Alice Faye poured out her unrequited love for John Payne in *Hello, Frisco, Hello.*

The marked discrepancy between the plangent romanticism of the song and little Alice's defiant practicality ('I can sing better than Alice Faye. . . and if anybody doesn't like it they can blow it out their ass') casts its shadow over the rest of the film: suggesting, for instance, that her early marriage (because she was pregnant) left romantic yearnings unfulfilled, while her ambitions were sacrificed in favour of every young girl's duty to become a wife and mother. And with her parents frozen opposite each other behind the blinds in a pose which may or may not suggest domestic harmony—but which foreshadows the status quo of her own marriage—the song also ironically intimates that we'll never know just how much she misses her parents or just how happy she really was in Monterey.

Immediately after the flashback, Scorsese cuts to twenty-seven years later and a scene in which Alice protests to her son about the Mott the Hoople disc blaring from his stereo. Somewhere along the way Alice dropped out of her career (just as her idol Alice Faye dropped out of Hollywood), and now she clings to those lost years with the apologetic conviction that she has become a stranger in the world of rock. Every time she sits down to sing, the camera circles lovingly, as though the music were swathing her in a protective cocoon; on the road, however, it is poised overhead, ready to pick up her car as it zooms away on the next stage of her journey, invariably to the confident, driving accompaniment of rock songs. All roads forward, one might say, lead to *Monterey Pop*. All roads back lead to a spurious past which has perhaps less to do with Alice Faye or memories of childhood happiness than with romantic notions indelibly associated with place names: 'It happened in Monterey/So long ago . . . ' John Boles was crooning way back in 1930. Significantly enough, the number she chooses as an audition piece for her comeback is 'I Can't Remember Where or When'. Equally significantly, since she is now hesitantly back in the market for love, the two numbers she sings on her debut are 'Could You Care?' and 'I've Got a Crush on You' (with their trepidation immediately contrasted with the brash ebullience of Betty Grable singing 'Cuddle Up a Little Closer' in a late TV show of *Coney Island*).

Unexpectedly and exhilaratingly, given the potential soulfulness of the theme, the film itself is geared to Betty Grable overdrive, stretched taut along the line of a marvellous non-stop crosstalk act between Alice and her ferociously precocious son: a duel in which he flattens her every gambit with a destructive wisecrack worthy of Groucho himself, illustrating to perfection the schizophrenic syndrome whereby mothers would dearly love to take an axe to their little darlings but are prevented by mother love from doing so. Meanwhile, juggling the moods of Robert Getchell's script with the brilliance of Godard in his prime, Scorsese flips scenes over to reveal the other side of the coin, then balances them on edge with both sides on view: like the depressing series of bars and barmen that reduce job-hunting Alice to tears as she hurries away, unaware of the glow of sympathy she has aroused, or the sleazy hell-hole of a hash-joint which is metamorphosed into what may well be the first real haven of happiness she has ever known.

But the accompanying stream of jokes and wisecracks not only give the film the breezy insouciance of a Thirties screwball comedy; they are (like the songs) one of its main means of communication. Earlier, we saw Alice's marriage as poised dangerously over a volcano which a careful dosage of humour prevents from ever being in danger of erupting ('Is it good?' she asks of the lunch she has cooked; 'It's O.K.' she wryly answers herself in the absence of any response). Having lost even the precarious security of her marriage, she continues to use humour as a defence against recognising the truth.

It is a wisecrack which leads her to succumb to the smoothly practised pick-up technique of the young man (Harvey Keitel) who later turns out to be a dangerous paranoiac; conversely, shocked by the alien sewer mentality of the Rabelaisian waitress in the hash-joint (Diane Ladd), Alice is ground into a kind of loathing until the splendid moment of hysteria when a particularly dazzling piece of foul-mouthed invention lets her into the secret that this is someone else's form of protection. Similarly, worn down by the duel of wits with her son in which she is persistently the loser, Alice makes a final discovery. In a despairing moment of weakness, she asks him what she should do: 'How should I know?' he asks with unanswer-

able logic, 'I'm only 12 years old.' A final moment of truth in which Alice at last grows up, rediscovering her inalienable right to challenge the world on its own terms and yell: 'And if anybody doesn't like it they can blow it out their ass.'

TOM MILNE

The Day of the Locust

Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* is almost certainly the best book to have emerged from the Hollywood experience and the one that makes the most successful use of Los Angeles (the city of desperate illusions) and the movie industry (the factory of mass dreams) as a metaphor for, and microcosm of, American society. It is perhaps no coincidence that its two major rivals for that title, Budd Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run?* and Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon*, should have been written by close friends of West's at the same time in the late Thirties; also, that all three should have been on the far left, Marxists or semi-Marxist, each in different ways anticipating the imminent collapse of the social order.

West's novel stands above the others not for its balance, or its compassion, or its profound insight into the modern world. On the contrary it is not strong in these qualities. It triumphs largely through the power with which it puts across, and the formal dexterity with which it contains, West's savage, satirical vision. It depicts realistically, though highly selectively, a world gone mad, and prophesies Armageddon. Most of the characters are grotesque losers on the fringe of the movie industry—the dwarf bookmaker Abe Kusich; the ageing comedian Harry Greener, making a living peddling useless polish door to door; Harry's daughter Faye, the untalented, frigid, but weirdly alluring actress who aspires hopelessly to stardom; the dim-witted cowboy extra Earle Shoop; the pathetic middle-Western hotel clerk Homer Simpson.

They are held in focus within the book by Tod Hackett, a Yale-educated artist, brought to Hollywood to study set design at National Films. Like Homer and Earle, he's hopelessly in love with Faye. But Tod has in mind a vast apocalyptic painting, 'The Burning of Los Angeles', into which all the book's principal figures will be worked as members of a mob of destructive crusaders. This horde is composed of the star-devouring malcontents in whom the American dream has turned sour; they have followed the sun as far West as they can and are here in California to try anything, and, as Hackett sees it, to die. They are not, however, what used to be fondly known in the Thirties as 'the masses'. When at the end a crowd goes wild outside a movie première and creates Tod's vision around him in Hollywood Boulevard, West tells us this explicitly, in a short paragraph clearly designed to forestall criticism from the ideological left: 'Tod could see very few people who looked tough, nor could he see any working men. The crowd was made up of the lower middle-classes, every other person one of his torchbearers.'

The ideal director for *The Day of the Locust* (CIC) would have been the Jean-Luc Godard who made *Le Mépris* and *Weekend*. Tod Hackett with his self-conscious ideas of redeeming the world through art would once have been an ideal Godard hero; in the course of the book Tod invokes a dozen artists ranging from Salvator Rosa to Winslow Homer—Godard would probably have worked them into the film both visually and through a running commentary on the action. John Schlesinger, however, is on the face of it by no means ill-equipped for the task. From the start of his movie-making career, Schlesinger has evidenced a sharp, rather gloating eye for the grotesque, the mean, the vulgar, disguised beneath an increasingly thin coating of compassion. Images of disgust and disillusionment with greed, desire and bodily functions recur in his films—as much in *Darling* and *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* as in the Times Square squalor of *Midnight Cowboy*.

With his screenwriter Waldo Salt (who scripted *Midnight Cowboy*), Schlesinger has faithfully translated West's novel from beginning to end. Or rather from before the beginning to after the end. Where the novel starts *in medias res*, Salt and Schlesinger back-track to produce a chronological narrative. So we see, for instance, at the outset Tod's arrival at the sleazy San Bernardino Arms and his first meeting with Faye. From hints in the text they create an elaborate scene in which Tod accompanies Faye and Earle to a Glendale cinema where they see her appearing briefly in the 1938 Eddie Cantor movie *Ali Baba Goes to Town* (a somewhat more elevated venture than the book's 'two-reel farce'), and Tod steals from the foyer the picture of Faye which subsequently hangs in his room. At the end, after the riot, there is a coda in which Faye goes to Tod's deserted apartment, and we infer rather oddly that he's dead: as she walks round, a paper carnation which Tod has placed in the earthquake-cracked wall (a neat opening image that) suddenly starts to bleed.

The Los Angeles scene is carefully observed or re-created, both in and out of doors, with West's stress on the bizarre architecture brought out; few films in fact have used the city itself to such telling effect, and some of the credit for this must go to the designer Richard MacDonald. The casting too is generally excellent, the people feel right, with that raw Thirties look to them; and in most cases they perform well too—most notably Burgess Meredith as Harry, Karen Black as Faye, and Donald Sutherland as Homer. Why then with all this fidelity and loving devotion should the film ultimately prove so disappointing? Why does it leave one feeling glum and depressed in the way that an exhibition of Diane Arbus photographs does, rather than exhilarated and braced as one feels after seeing a Buñuel film or reading West's novel?

The first error lies in the two-hour-and-twenty-minute duration. It just goes on and on. As was the case with Jack Clayton's film of *The Great Gatsby*, an economic, elliptical and suggestive work has been stretched out as if length conferred depth. The film has been running forty minutes before Harry Greener even appears, and every point gets made over and over again. The second flaw is that, divorced from the witty, laconic style of West's precise prose, the whole business becomes not much more than a realistic account of low-life around Hollywood in the Thirties that might have been adapted from a novel by Horace McCoy or James M. Cain. The odd reference to Hitler's menacing activities on a newsreel, to Chamberlain and Munich on the radio, and to Roosevelt in newspaper headlines, establishes a period rather than a political context.

This leads on to the most important failure, which concerns the handling of the character and function of Tod Hackett. William Atherton captures the surface doltishness only too well. But as West tells us on the second page of the novel, this is totally misleading: 'Yes, despite his appearance he was really a very complicated young man with a whole set of personalities, one inside the other like a nest of Chinese boxes. And "The Burning of Los Angeles", a picture which he was soon to paint, definitely proved he had talent.'

This side of Hackett—the visionary artist—is never suggested by Atherton's performance. We see him doing some sketches for the Waterloo film but these only establish him as a competent pasticheur. Without West's notion of Hackett and the picture 'which he was soon to paint' (the author's tense and construction here are important), the inexorable build-up to the final riot is lost. In consequence the merging of the actual event and Tod's imaginative extension of it has little more than shock value, and is likely to mystify anyone unacquainted with the book.

PHILIP FRENCH

Night Moves

Not since the Forties, perhaps, has the private investigator enjoyed such a vogue as, in various guises, he does at present. The kinds of crimes to be solved remain much the same, as do the settings which breed them (sultry, slowly corrupting Los Angeles is still the *locus classicus*), and even the detectives themselves persist from decade to decade. But perspectives have shifted and the detective is no longer quite so

'The Day of the Locust': Karen Black as Faye Greener

firmly rooted at the centre of the drama; not only is there a suggestion (as in the *film noir* of the late 1940s) that the solution to one mystery may be a trapdoor into another, but that mysteries may be inconsequential teases, like the routes into a labyrinth, and that the man who is paid to pry into other people's business, and to keep his nose pressed to the ground for clues, may be the least qualified to find the centre.

Robert Altman was taken to task for stripping the Chandler hero of his chivalry and necessity in *The Long Goodbye*, partly because it seemed unmannerly to run down Marlowe's professional competence in terms of his personal slovenliness, partly because Altman clearly resented Marlowe as much as he did changing times for the detective's being so inappropriate in attitude and behaviour. In *The Conversation* the professional snoop was too psychotic, and in *Chinatown* too 'innocent', to deal with the situation he uncovered. *The Parallax View* went furthest towards excusing his ineffectuality, and redeeming him for his snooping, by casting him throughout as a helpless pawn. Arthur Penn's *Night Moves* (Columbia-Warner) returns to the attack, and leads perhaps the most subtly destructive assault on the private eye ethos, showing the protagonist to be an active self-deceiver and devotee of all manner of games, a man whose bad faith turns out to be equal to that of the thieves and killers with whom he becomes involved.

In Penn's first film in five years, and one plainly reflecting a deepening disillusionment in the closing out of the social 'alternatives' of *Alice's Restaurant* and *Little Big Man*, it is appropriate that Harry Moseby (Gene Hackman) should be a compromised figure of forty, yet still have something in common with the youthful, homeless protagonists of Penn's previous films. More than the classic independence of his trade ('That's not an agency, that's an information factory,' as he remarks of an offer of work in another detection outfit), it is the very nature of his job and the limitations of his personal life that set Harry apart, marooned between a past he has rejected and a present that is reduced to a closely circumscribed set of moves.

Given the assignment of finding the missing daughter, Delly (Melanie Griffith), of ageing starlet Arlene Iverson, Harry eventually tracks her to the Florida Keys haven of her stepfather Tom (John Crawford). He returns her to her mother before having any inkling of a further network of complications, involving the smuggling of art treasures from Mexico, which will prove fatal for Delly. Information, ironically, is the form into which Harry feeds everything that is happening to him and around him: it is pouring from a tape recorder in his car when he first discovers his wife's infidelity, and it is turned on him, playfully, by Tom's mistress Paula, who at various times tells how dolphins are now considered chic additions to swimming pools, how alligators roam the New York sewers after being flushed away as pets, and how sharks must keep constantly in motion in order to stay alive. She challenges Harry's compulsion to ask questions; and his reply at one point—'I just want you to know I'm here'—provides a clue to the self-doubt which is exhumed later in a neat joke when Paula begins their love-making with the query, 'Harry Moseby, isn't it?' Throughout, there is a suggestive interplay and tension between the acting style of Jennifer Warren as Paula, loose, casual and humorously sensual—Penn's individual conception of the teasing mystery woman from detective fiction—and Hackman's professional control, just sufficiently edgy to intimate areas of repression.

As an ex-football player and now an *aficionado* of chess, Harry evidently goes about the business of detection in the same spirit; in those areas of his life where investigation actually threatens to be revealing, he draws back. In the heated confrontation with his wife Ellen (Susan Clark) over the latter's adultery, Harry's flippancy provokes an impatience ('Don't start with the sporting metaphors') which leads to an all-out assault on his profession. Later, after a kind of reconciliation, he tells her the story of his search for the father by whom he was abandoned, and how, after a successful investigation of which he was 'pretty proud', he declined to approach the old man.

In Harry's insulation, and his reluctance to conduct any kind of self-scrutiny, which leads to a general anti-intellectualism, Penn's undermining of the private eye has faint parallels with Robert Aldrich's more savage approach in *Kiss Me Deadly*. But *Night Moves* complicates the picture by indicting not only Harry but a whole environment. Art, after all, is being converted as fast as anything into items of commerce ('Some pieces of junk worth half a million,' as Paula says of the Mexican artefacts); and it is made clear that Delly's inheritance is the reason her mother wants her back. Harry's dissociation, limitations and compromises are highlighted and expanded on in the network of references which Alan Sharp's brilliant, aphoristically alert and prickly script makes to the Watergate drama and its actors, and to other events and personages back through American history. Harry is once or twice offered a chance at redemption by being given some scraps of personal history to which he can cling. In one scene he expatiates on a famous chess game where the perfect solution was missed by a player who, he assumes, must have regretted it every day of his life. To Harry's added comment, 'In fact, I regret it, and I wasn't even born yet,' Paula answers, 'That's no excuse.'

In keeping with the fragmentary, allusive nature of Sharp's script, Penn gives a discontinuous, episodic feeling to the film, achieving in the many long shots and night scenes a suggestion of contradictory perspectives on indefinable events (a suggestion unhandily emphasised by the naming of Tom's boat 'Point of View'). It is a style that is a little hampered by the fact that, for all its unconventional aims, *Night Moves* is also a thriller with an abundance of plot. But it is only really compromised by the rush with which so much of that plot is delivered in the last ten minutes, creating an artificial sense of climax instead of the dying fall for which the film seemed to be heading.

RICHARD COMBS

'Kaseki': Japanese travellers (Keiko Kishi, Shin Saburi) in Europe

Kaseki

When Masaki Kobayashi tells a story, he tells it in painstaking detail, piling up actions and consequences to create a solid structure of events. With *Kaseki* (Essential Cinema), his determination to leave nothing unsaid results in a film of just over three-and-a-half hours, proceeding at meditative pace and promising neither the ghosts of *Kwaidan* nor the bloodshed of *Rebellion* to sustain us on the journey. No romance, no costume, no heroism, and since the commentary tells us the plot in a couple of sentences at the beginning, apparently no surprises in store. The story is of a lonely widower preparing to die of inoperable cancer in his late fifties after a long and successful business career, a theme without novelty, glamour, or comfort. We may be forgiven for approaching with caution.

In Kobayashi's films, however, nothing is quite as it seems. Exterior and interior realities can differ alarmingly, as with the episode in *Kwaidan* when a man awakens from a night with his wife to find her corpse embracing him. Itsuki (Shin Saburi), the melancholy businessman of *Kaseki*, is in similar clutches, the imminence of his own death forcing him to observe his surroundings with new and unexpected meaning. His surroundings, too, are unexpected: where Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* offered a pilgrimage among relatives and memories, and Kurosawa's *Ikiru* dwelt on the evasive reunion with old friends, Kobayashi's dark journey is made across wholly foreign territory—the streets of Paris and Seville, and the ancient mountain towns of Burgundy. Guarding the secret of his illness, Itsuki plays the role of tourist, outwardly blasé, inwardly certain he will never return. The undercurrent of finality gives Kobayashi's images a particular intensity, whether flashing blue-blonde nightclub dancers or the hillsides of Autun, trees outlined in mist like a Japanese watercolour. The film points out landmarks, provides musical interludes, and explores architectural detail like a classroom documentary, but Kobayashi has put us in no position to turn deaf ears.

Similarly unexpected is Itsuki's black-robed shadow (Keiko Kishi), her features those of a Japanese woman he has seen in Paris, her identity a complex of symbols—for an inaccessible love, for the youth he has lost, for Death in constant attendance. With chilly smile, she speaks for the forces he can't control, mocking his few attempts to behave normally, to plan ahead, to consider a tentative future with the real woman she resembles. More simply she is, as she says, his *alter ego*; she stands for his own detachment, the haughty (and occasionally petulant) assertion of superiority over his

employees and his family. It's a superiority he has never previously questioned; but now, suddenly, nobody else seems to notice it. He finds his real self weak, mortal and unexceptional.

After facing the depths, Itsuki has nowhere to go but up. His visit to Burgundy in the fortuitous company of the woman who has attracted him results in her amiable promise that they'll meet again when she comes to Japan. The promise is meaningless: she is happily married, no greatly different from thousands of other Japanese women, and he won't survive that long anyway. But it's a consoling fantasy, and he returns with it to Japan, strengthened enough to restore his ailing company single-handedly, put his domestic affairs in order, and take leave of a forgotten friend or two. At last he lies in the snow to die and fondly pictures the blossom he won't be seeing on the trees above his head. At which point the story takes its final unexpected turn and Itsuki is restored briskly to full health with perhaps another forty years ahead of him. What's he going to do with them? Kobayashi leaves us to think up an answer or two as Itsuki's phantom, still smiling, fades from the screen, and Itsuki himself, deprived of his one remaining companion, sits in frozen consternation at a café table.

Specialist in the unforeseen, Kobayashi neatly tips his three-and-a-half hours of narrative on its head with these closing sequences. Like his haunted predecessors in *Harakiri* and *Rebellion*, Itsuki has broken the rules and beaten the system, and like them he is left with nothing to live for. His survival is purposeless, actually an embarrassment to the relatives and colleagues who had watched his apparent departure with genuine grief. He is already outdated, and coping with him would be far more difficult than coping without him. But it would seem that Kobayashi is no longer interested in granting the romantic fiction of a proud and memorable suicide, even to illustrate the pointlessness of the society that would interpret it in such terms. Today's samurai, working himself into his grave behind an office desk, is challenged to find good reason for his sacrifice, and to find it while he's still in a position to change his mind.

The irony of the film, of course, is that Kobayashi recognises there are perfectly good reasons for minds *not* to be changed. In *Kaseki* (the name translates as 'fossil') the old and the new maintain a perpetual balance; the casual energy of Itsuki's young friends, dragging him despite himself on a revitalising tour of the countryside, is matched by the confident efficiency of the experienced surgeon who brings a lifetime of knowledge to his rescue operation. The French medieval churches and Rodin's massive sculptures (studied by the film in fascinated detail) convey the heat of life in the midst of inanimate stone. A wall of coral, Itsuki is reminded by his closest friend, is a million-year accumulation of fossils; change is constant, but it's caused by unchanging natural laws. With affection, fear and tranquillity, Kobayashi has shown us something of how those laws operate.

PHILIP STRICK

The Mattei Affair and Lucky Luciano

Amid the confusion of police interrogators, newspapermen and sightseers, a mechanical shovel hauls fragments of wreckage from a muddy crater As a reconstruction of the air crash that killed Enrico Mattei near Milan in October 1962, the opening of Francesco Rosi's *The Mattei Affair* (Cinegate) establishes with brutal clarity that to dig up information is never a simple task. And later, when the twisted remains of Mattei's private jet are set out in macabre mosaic to be argued over by the experts, the further point is made that no amount of exhumed information can guarantee possession of the truth. In every biography there must be craters; the realistic way to fill them in is by using the adjacent landscape.

'*Lucky Luciano*'

In the case of Enrico Mattei, variously described during the 1950s as 'the most powerful Italian since Julius Caesar' (an American newspaper) and 'the most important since Marco Polo' (Chou En-Lai), there was considerable ground to be covered. Having talked his way into control of the state oil company immediately after the war, Mattei set out to eradicate private speculators in Italy's limited natural resources, and to challenge the Middle Eastern monopoly held by the so-called 'seven sisters', the major Western oil companies. Breaking unconcernedly with the terms normally offered in oil negotiations, he championed the people of the Third World with the insistence that they should be the first to benefit from the wealth that was there to be mined from their own countries. It was a lesson, of course, to which they paid close attention, with long-term results. It was also a policy which created enemies for Mattei, and his sudden death was an event of significant political convenience in a number of areas, to the extent that suspicions were inevitably voiced about its cause. Eight years later, a journalist investigating Mattei's last hours for the purposes of Rosi's film disappeared without trace, and again it could be inferred that political interests were being protected. His colleagues, interviewed for the film, commented sadly: 'People like things to stay as they are . . .'

Such thickets of ambiguity provide fertile territory for speculative journalism, but Rosi is careful to avoid accusations, stating firmly that he simply wants to raise some questions for the public to consider. What we make of them is presumably up to us, which seems a little unjust in that it's Rosi's own selection of the available facts which is being presented and we have to take on trust what he considers vital to our understanding of the case. If Rosi has done all the research without reaching a verdict, how can *we* be in a position to draw any conclusions? His film depends, in short, on the assumption that Rosi knows more than he's telling—an assumption which of course adds many a meaningful nod and wink to the film's glancingly elliptical course. It also, unfortunately, renders it invalid as factual documentary; what *The Mattei Affair* gives us is fiction tantalisingly disguised as history.

It's the standard formula for neo-realism, of which Rosi (along with Ermanno Olmi) appears to be one of the few surviving practitioners. At its purest, neo-realism requires a cast of non-actors, an elegiac visual style, and a moral standpoint on the popular side of Leftist; *The Mattei Affair* fits these specifications closely, with the one interesting exception that Mattei himself is played by today's Tognazzi, the ubiquitous Gian Maria Volonté. They merge into a single, mythic figure, explosive, dominating, endlessly on the move, a fabulously rich revolutionary nationalist promising equal wealth for all. As with *Salvatore Giuliano*, the film revolves round a character about whom little is known but volumes have been written, and as with *Hands Over the City* we are being called to celebrate a heroic ingenuity and vitality, the god-like disbursement of sheer power, without wasting too many tears on conventional legal processes. Rosi clearly places no trust in lesser mortals; even when he finally bursts into the film himself and starts asking awkward questions at the airport bar, the waiters edge nervously away, shaking with instant guilt. There's always a plot, and everyone else is always in on it—the police, the government (of whom, imaginably for diplomatic reasons, we see remarkably little in *The Mattei Affair*), the Mafia, the aeronautics experts, the witnesses. Like Peter Watkins, Rosi brings conspiracy to our attention and invites our outraged concern. As with Watkins, it is the essential selectivity of film that renders his statistics unreliable.

So *The Mattei Affair*, like *Salvatore Giuliano*, is the saga of a folk hero, and in the manner of its telling it lives up to its subject, punching along with a magnificent clamour of images as if trying to put Charles Foster Kane out of business. As the news of Mattei's death is phoned incredulously around the world, the office lights go on, layer by layer, across the façade of his headquarters, and the concept seems perpetuated throughout the film as table-lamps are lit, flashlights crackle, police signals revolve, and the giant torches of burning gas illuminate barren landscapes. At the end, even the lightning flashes as a vivid alternative to the sabotage theory. In the eye of the storm, Volonté provides his own hurricane perform-

ance, a volatile bolt of energy, tearing down the corridors of state, flying proprietorially over Sicily, and casting a hungry gaze at the moon ('I wonder if there's oil up there?'). But the film's touch is just as sure away from all the colours and crowds. There is, for instance, the splendid lunch at which Mattei is placidly snubbed by an American oil baron, a deft and ironic drama observed with precision timing. Whether it really happened that way seems immaterial; as cinema, it's unarguable.

With *Lucky Luciano* (EMI), made the following year (1973), one would have expected Rosi to have an easier time. After *The Godfather*, films about gangsters seem unlikely to attract unwelcome attention in the wrong quarters; they are also popular enough to be immune from tampering, except by the censor for reasons of violence rather than of running time. The English version of *Lucky Luciano*, however, is twenty-one minutes shorter than the Italian, and since its moments of bloodshed are both infrequent and discreet the abbreviation is puzzling. Certainly it hasn't improved the rhythm of the film, which staggers at an uneven pace from one conference scene to the next like a delegate with jet-lag; but the cutting has also been unable to disguise what looks at times like an extremely hurried production assignment and a literally unspeakable script lifted verbatim from official records of meetings and interrogations.

As usual, the photography by De Santis is Rosi's trump card, and *Lucky Luciano* is unfailingly spectacular, particularly in the scenes of the American advance through Italy in 1944. What diminishes it is the detail—not the Glenn Miller band turning out war-time hits but the unconsumed sandwiches, not the supply train going by in the distance but the self-conscious group of beggars in the foreground. The conflict of purposes appears to be artistic rather than political this time: a gangster film is called for, all spattered shaving-foam and perforated furniture, but what Rosi has in mind, as with Mattei, is some mud-probing, an investigation into the real feet beneath the clay ones. For the purpose, he enlisted the extraordinary nemesis figure from the Narcotics Bureau who hunted Luciano for ten years; playing himself as to the manner born, Siragusa makes a bucolic Pat Garrett to Luciano's Billy, and his evident satisfaction in the role bears an authentic chill.

Luciano, like Mattei, proves an elusive martyr. Volonté (of course) plays him with weary eyes and a forgiving smile, pinching his nose from time to time like an absent-minded vicar. He says little, does nothing. That he was capable of dominating the entire Italian drug racket seems unthinkable, and Rosi doesn't seek to persuade us on the point. Instead, Luciano subsides into a dusty death from heart failure, suspected and accused on all sides, but complaining only, on the few occasions that he does talk, that Naples is a trivial setting for a man who once confronted President Roosevelt. When gangsters are called for, the film introduces Rod Steiger, huge and curly in a role that's too small for him, methodically slapping girls' bottoms, and eradicated nastily among the dustbins. Like the film, he's an affectionate and welcome experiment, but he's a long haul from neo-realism. It would seem that Rosi prefers his deaths and his villains to be more equivocal.

PHILIP STRICK

The Cars That Ate Paris

Paris, Australia, that is: a small collection of shabby houses with a ministering church and hospital, somewhere amongst the scrubwood and winding roads of the outback. Once it saw a gold rush; now it sees no one but its own dwindling inhabitants and the occasional motorist, lured there by the copious road signs. George and Arthur Waldo are among those lured: their car crashes; George is killed and Arthur recovers in hospital, alongside victims of similar accidents. After this, he doesn't feel much like driving a car and wanders about in a daze, forced to stay put in a community which gets more sinister day by day. Gradually it appears that the dying town is in the clichéd position of living off the refuse of a materialistic society—symbolised in this instance by the automobile (the accidents are planned, the cars and victims then looted). But the obviousness of its theme has little adverse effect on the success of *The Cars That Ate Paris* (Crawford Films), a grotesque and engaging horror-comedy and a fine feature debut by the Australian Peter Weir.

Weir's previous credits include a documentary about another isolated community—the Green Valley housing estate twenty-five miles west of Sydney (*Whatever Happened to Green Valley?*) and while one can hardly say that *The Cars That Ate Paris* has a documentary 'feel', his directorial manner is cool and collected enough for the depicted events to seem startlingly matter-of-fact. The Mayor is the most fully developed character in the bizarre drama; as played by John Meillon he recalls Robert Benchley without his befuddlement; he lives in a house of ghastly good Australian taste and vainly struggles to maintain respectability in the face of the hooligan car wreckers, who provide the town with its only action. Their leader is the cheery Dr. Midland, who gives Arthur, our daft hero, a nightmare tour of the hospital's zombie inmates; a fringe member of the wrecking crew is the village idiot Charlie, so immensely elongated that he seems to have been in a drastic car crash himself. And none of the other townsfolk seem absolutely ordinary: they sit on their porches quietly polishing odd bits of dismantled cars (the hub of a wheel, a bumper) the way other people stroke cats or knit. Apart from Arthur, the only other character who seems free from the town's strange obsession is the eager new vicar, so run off his feet that he dashes to confront a waiting congregation still clutching his briefcase.

In the hallowed horror movie tradition, Arthur is about to tell the vicar his fears when his potential ally meets a nasty death off-screen—'accidentally', the town decides. Now the movie's pace tightens and the eccentricities loom larger. The Mayor chooses Arthur as the town's first Parking Officer, but the wreckers taunt him with threats. Finally they and their vehicles (specially reinforced with spikes, wire nets and other vicious impediments) move in to raze the town, which is having a dubiously festive time at the Pioneers' Ball, in honour of Paris' foundation. It's a marvellously funny sequence, and any participant in village fêtes or church socials will recognise the seeds of truth: the lady pianist mechanically pounds out jolly tunes; the Mayor half-heartedly leads the dancing; everyone's 'fancy dress' seems desperate. However, their costumes are nothing compared with those of the hospital patients, who make a triumphant entrance with cereal packets on their heads or cardboard boxes round their waists. All scatter before the biffs and buffets of the cars; Paris' buildings collapse and the passive Arthur, in the driver's seat again, is whipped into fury, driving out of Paris with a new lust for life—or rather, death.

True, the movie has its faults: the pacing is often sluggish (particularly in the opening stages), the structuring of the story is haphazard, and most of the performances could be sharpened with benefit. But after the boorish and boring adventures of Alvin Purple and Barry McKenzie, it's refreshing and encouraging to find an Australian film which never wallows in its country's inglorious *mores* but uses them tactfully to further an intriguing and compelling narrative of its own.

GEOFF BROWN

'The Cars That Ate Paris': John Meillon as the mayor of Paris

Tommy

Between Mahler and Liszt comes *Tommy*, music for the times. The source for *Tommy* (Hemdale), the rock opera by Pete Townshend and The Who, seems on the face of it a more likely correlative of Ken Russell's pop art, hit or miss style than the lives of the composers, however allegedly colourful. Much trumpeted as a landmark in popular music, and with the added cachet of performances with the London Symphony Orchestra and at New York's Metropolitan Opera House, the original 'opera' is a fragmented piece, in fact a cantata rather than an opera since it has no independent dramatic structure. Intermittently inventive, always lively, it remains a series of separate units linked only by a disparate if vigorous style. Which is a fair capsule description of Russell's film-making style.

Not surprising, then, that *Tommy* represents both the best and the worst of Ken Russell, often within the same sequence. The overture, for instance, finds Robert Powell and Ann-Margret silhouetted against a Lake District sunset, a garish natural tableau soon echoed in

a studio-fabricated red haze as bomber pilot Powell crashes in flames. The collision of styles continues throughout the relentless recitative of the exposition (Tommy's birth on VE day, the end of austerity holiday camp, the mirror image trauma of his returning father's death which turns Tommy deaf, dumb and blind), where the visual dissonance threatens to swamp the music and it is only the monotone sweep of the music which carries over the dramatic incoherence. Russell's visual representations of the score (already, in 'Quintaphonic' sound, well into aural extravagance) are here merely aggravating annotations—in, out and zoom it all about like some nightmare conjunction of TV soap operatics and TV commercials. The rest, as nearly always in Russell's cinema, is bits and showpieces. And it would scarcely be worth noting did it not exemplify the familiar problem in responding to a Russell film: for all the tuppence-coloured banality (perhaps because of it), there is no denying the vitality of expression (it is hardly a style) which punctuates his films like an excess of exclamation marks.

And why should one deny it? Russell is rightly contemptuous of critics who have labelled (bludgeoned) him as 'tasteless', whatever that means. And if one index of a visual style is that it is irreducible to, or at best impoverished by, verbal exposition, it is not the only one. Russell's visual method is 'obvious' and 'banal' only in the sense that pop art is obvious and banal. Like pop art it can be both narcissistic and self-defeating; whether it is or not depends on whether the method, and its paraphernalia, is merely self-justifying or makes some discernible connection with the material. The analogy is not gratuitous. That frequently visited shrine of pop art, Marilyn Monroe, makes an appearance in *Tommy* in the shape of a grotesque plaster model, the centrepiece of the faith-healing carnival—a familiar Russell amalgam of religious hysteria and tame blasphemy—to which Tommy (Roger Daltrey) is taken in the hope of finding a cure for his catatonic trance. Here, as with the cannon-ball sequence in *Music Lovers* or the Nazi emblems in the television 'biography' of Richard Strauss, the iconography seems both inapposite and superfluous, the more so for Russell's insistent illustration of it. The brash banality of this sequence contrasts tellingly with set pieces in which shrill decor and frenzied camera are more than simply eye-jarring adjuncts. This is particularly evident in the 'Pinball Wizard' sequence, where the combination of the vibrating music, Elton John in shimmering costume and gigantic lace-up boots, and the massed ranks of screaming youth is a genuine merger of method and material.

The same is true, though for slightly different reasons, of the Acid Queen sequence, where Tommy is encased in a steel maiden whose every joint and orifice accommodates a drug-injecting syringe. Here perhaps it is Tina Turner's astonishing voice and movement which gives Russell the necessary framework for his effects, all flashing lights and primary colours. Elsewhere, though, the film is punctuated by examples of method annihilating subject, or at best merely doodling round the margins of an already amply illustrated text. Some passages are disastrous, in particular the gaudy display of Tommy's mother (Ann-Margret, whose strident vocal mannerisms and misconceived attempt to act her songs are at odds with Oliver Reed's amiably self-parodying performance) floundering in a sea of soap suds, cereal and liquid chocolate oozing out of a television screen. Other sequences, like the murderous revolt of Tommy's holiday camp celebrants, are merely clumsy, a disorganised rabble of extras and effects.

In other words, this is the Russell mixture as before. In *Tommy*, though, there is a difference. Where previously the garish, only superficially outrageous display has obstinately remained just that, there is evidence enough here of subject and author making a genuine, if often troubled, marriage of like minds.

Elton John in 'Tommy'

Perhaps, after all, that is the key to Russell's film-making. Like any pop artist, he needs a special relationship with his material. When he finds it, as he does in several of the units of *Tommy*, the effect can be dazzling. When he doesn't, as he doesn't at intervals in *Tommy*, the result is mere discord.

DAVID WILSON

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What attracted the Straubs to the work? Not just the music, but also the subject-matter, the libretto. In Schönberg's view, the struggle between Moses and Aaron was the conflict between the word and the image, the truth and its distortion when it is visualised, when it is put into metaphor. Susan Sontag said, it's the book versus TV, the perfect anti-McLuhan film. It can be taken that way. But the opera also has a political significance, and Engels was not the only one to see the rise of monotheism as one of the most important dialectical steps in human history. Dialectical because it, too, soon went wrong. But at a time when polytheism was rampant in Egypt, and when the Egyptian gods were all symbols of the central power and the pharaohs, monotheism was indeed a step forward.

Schönberg's own feelings about the state of Israel were, I think, ambiguous. Not so with the Straubs: they feel that the departure into the desert, the wilderness, was a Utopian push forward, but they are sure that Schönberg, like them, was against *all* nationalistic states, including Israel.

So much for the philosophical context of the film. It is also an aesthetic experience which in its experimentalism seems to me much more interesting and rewarding than any number of avowedly 'experimental' films, particularly in the Straubs' use of the camera. The relationships between the chorus and Aaron, between Moses and Aaron, are all expressed in the placings, the angles and the movements of the camera. I don't think that anyone could fail to be moved by the music, which, as was the case when the work was done at Covent Garden, proves remarkably 'easy to take'; but even without the soundtrack, one feels that the film could (almost) stand on its own. With the soundtrack (the same orchestra, conductor and singers as in the recent Philips recording), the film is an overwhelming experience, even for those who don't usually respond to Straub's work.

The Directors' Fortnight was lively this year, and for me the two most interesting works were André Téchiné's **Souvenirs d'en France** (an untranslatable pun: 'Memories of In-Francy' is the closest I can get) and Robert Kramer and John Douglas' *Milestones*. The Téchiné film, written by the director and Marilyn Goldin, is a survey of French political life of the last seventy years as reflected in the story of a French provincial family. It is also a survey of styles of film-making of recent years, which may misleadingly make it sound like a pastiche. But just as the music for *India Song* is an evocation of the music of the 1930s rather than a nostalgic copy, so here when a scene in the late 1930s is done in the style of the period, it is distanced and stylised.

The work is composed of rather brief Brechtian tableaux; and indeed the central character of Bertha, the seamstress who marries into the factory-owning family and gradually takes over, could be seen as something like the Irresistible Rise of the Bad Woman of Setzuan. But Jeanne Moreau, splendid though she is, is not allowed to have it all her own way, for her performance is more than matched by that of Marie-France Pisier as the silly-smart daughter-in-law who gets fed up with this boring family, grabs the first American soldier she can find at the Liberation, goes off to America with him, and returns years later as a smart businesswoman determined to buy her divorce with the injection of American capital into the family factory. Always the family story is emblematic of political events; it is not that Marie-France Pisier 'stands for' the American takeover of French companies; the personal dramas and political developments have been effectively and divertingly fused. It's both a very funny film and a beautifully made work; an unusual combination, but Téchiné (this is only his second film) is an unusual director.

I haven't left myself much space for **Milestones**, and it deserves it, for it seems to me the best American independent film since . . . well, since *Ice*. Not everyone at Cannes agreed with me, but the film is almost sure to be opening in England and America before long, and readers will have a chance to make up their own minds.

RICHARD ROUD

BOOK REVIEWS

NABOKOV'S DARK CINEMA

By Alfred Appel Jr

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, £8.75

Beginning with Alfred Appel's enslavement by Ella Raines and John Wayne as an adolescent moviegoer in the Forties, and ending with his persuasive perception of *Duck Soup* as a possible illumination of the Zemblan story in *Pale Fire*, *Nabokov's Dark Cinema* is an exhaustive (sometimes exhausting) survey of the role of popular culture in Nabokov's work. What, exactly, does it demonstrate? Nothing much, really, but it's fun going along for what turns out to be a surprisingly entertaining ride.

To disperse misconceptions that may be aroused in film-oriented readers by the book's title and the expressionism of the still used on the dust-jacket (Ella Raines' ominous visit to the jailed Alan Curtis in *Phantom Lady*), it should perhaps be pointed out that the implication in 'Nabokov's Dark Cinema' is more *camera obscura* (the original title of *Laughter in the Dark*) than *film noir*. Appel, in other words, is concerned less with cinema *per se* than with elucidating Nabokov through the cinema and pop culture in general. Casting his scholarly net wide and examining a varied catch that includes Joyce's echoes of the Mutoscope in Bloom's reveries, Nathanael West's adaptation of the comic strip's stylisations in *Miss Lonelyhearts*, and Faulkner's use of cartoons to define his characters (e.g. Popeye in *Sanctuary*, 'an empty outline in place of a moral creature'), Appel not only traces the infiltration of literature by counter-culture through to its peak in the work of writers like Hammett, Cain and Chandler (and through them to the *film noir* of the Forties), but demonstrates the slow and painful process by which émigré Nabokov, preparing for *Lolita*, made himself familiar with the sights and sounds of consumer America—the billboards, juke-boxes, comic strips, magazines, movies and pop jargon that constitute Lolita's dream and Humbert's hell.

But Nabokov, as anyone who has read his work can hardly help but be aware, entertains a low opinion of the cinema; or at least (interviews reveal him to have been a fairly persistent filmgoer who retains a particular fondness for Laurel and Hardy) almost invariably uses it as a touchstone for meretriciousness. Much of Appel's time is therefore spent in explaining conventions and documenting generalised references which any self-respecting moviegoer takes for granted. Quite often the pedantic precision pays dividends. Most moviegoers, for instance, will have pricked up their ears in reading *Lolita* when Humbert notes his discovery that the two movies scheduled to open in Briceland the week after his 'honeymoon' there with Lolita were *Brute Force* and *Possessed*; some of us, at least, may not have had the patience or the precision to reflect just how relevant these films were (the prominently featured pin-up in the cell in *Brute Force* relates to Humbert's photograph of his lost love; Joan Crawford's doomed love and subsequent madness echo Humbert in more ways than one).

More frequently, however, one begins to suspect that Alfred Appel—author of *The Annotated Lolita* as well as sundry other bits of Nabokoviana—must be a relative of Dr. Kinbote, the phenomenally pedantic commentator in *Pale Fire* who perversely insists on commenting utter irrelevancies. Thus the scene where Margot is jilted in *Laughter in the Dark* and goes 'to a dance hall as abandoned damsels do in films' to be accosted by 'two Japanese gentlemen' conjures a list of yellow peril movie villains (with no reference to the fact that the stereotype dates much further back in fiction) which culminates triumphantly in the irrelevant fact that *Camera Obscura* (*Laughter in the Dark* in its first draft) and the film of *The Mask of Fu Manchu* both appeared in 1932.

Dr. Kinbote's commentary to John Shade's poem in *Pale Fire* may have nothing to do with anything on hand, but it makes compulsive reading in its own right; and so with Appel's book, as considerations of nymphet Lolita lead him—by way of the awful Adore in *Day of the Locust*—to a rundown on Hollywood moppets; or a description of Nabokov's troubled early days as an émigré in Berlin, when he appeared as an extra in a couple of films, culminates in the inevitable evocation of Jannings as the Russian general turned Hollywood extra in *The Last Command*. Apart from anything else, the various trails followed frequently adduce useful bits of information gleaned from Nabokov himself: one might perhaps have guessed that he fondly recalled key scenes from *A Night at the Opera*, but who would have dreamed that he sat through (and subsequently made use of) the entire Tom Conway *Falcon* series? They also offer a good deal of help in unravelling Nabokov's linguistic playfulness (the 'Yuzlik' who directed the adults-only 'Don Juan's Last Fling' in *Ada* is apparently 'little Hughes'—Howard *The Outlaw* Hughes, no doubt) and his often multilayered puns. Anyone who proudly negotiates the literary reef (Maupassant's *La Petite Rocque*) when the governess in *Ada* writes a story 'about a town mayor's strangling a small girl called Rockette,' may well founder on the implication that 'Rockette . . . who liked to frolic' is also connected with the Radio City Music Hall.

The best chapter in the book is probably the one which discusses the iconography of the *film noir* in relation to the novel *Lolita*, adumbrating a film very different to Kubrick's from a consideration of the *film noir* echoes in passages like Humbert's reverie during his frustrated first night with Lolita, when 'the avenue under the window of my insomnia, to the west of my wake—a staid, eminently residential, dignified alley of huge trees—degenerated into the despicable haunts of gigantic trucks roaring through the wet and windy night.' Nearly all of what Appel says concerning Kubrick's failure to root *Lolita* in a *film noir* ambience is well argued and documented from the book itself, with particular attention to the lush score which betrayed Lolita's own pop ethos and should have been as directly and as ironically evocative as the use of 'Tangerine' in *Double Indemnity* or 'Always' in *Christmas Holiday*. But what the chapter boils down to is really what most film critics pointed out in the first place: the fact that the road and motel scenes, being shot in England, robbed the film of the Americanness so essential to Nabokov's purpose.

An invaluable book, therefore, and a maddening one, in which Appel might profitably have spent more time speculating on how the cinema could stretch itself to accommodate Nabokov's vision, and less in documenting the extent to which cinematic techniques (as well as stereotypes) find their parallels in the novels. Appel clearly hasn't seen Skolimowski's version of *King, Queen, Knave*; and more's the pity since this is not only the most Nabokovian film adaptation to date, but one in which Skolimowski's approach to the problem of giving objects an autonomous life (*King, Queen, Knave* gives the objects' view, as it were, of a murderous triangle) is relevant to Nabokov's work as a whole.

Talking of the cars in *Lolita*, for instance, Appel acutely notes that automobiles in the early gangster movies were seen purely as status symbols, getaway vehicles or conveniently mobile platforms from which to spray machine-gun bullets. Later, '*film noir* personalised that violence' and, following the wartime shortage which made the car 'a familiar worn figure, a member of the family whose own nutritional needs were subjected to rationing' (hence the proliferation of scenes in gas stations), could even present one as both refuge and coffin in a film like *Out of the Past*, where Robert Mitchum apparently has no other home but the car in which he lives and dies. All of which is relevant to *Lolita*, but Humbert's even more extreme involvement with his car, which he eventually personifies as a limping man, is one that cannot be encompassed by *film noir* alone.

Intriguing possibilities for metamorphosis are opened up by the suitcase that stands in as an aeroplane, or the table that heaves up with anxiety, in Skolimowski's *King, Queen, Knave*. Similarly with *Ada*, which Appel describes as an 'improbable if not impossible book to film.' Perhaps, but with its parallel (or dislocated) worlds and time scales it has a certain kinship with *Je t'aime, je t'aime*; and speculatively at least, Resnais' techniques offer possibilities as to how its composite vision of 19th century Russia and 20th century America might be encompassed. *Marienbad*, after all, bridges a time gap between settings and characters so effectively that one sometimes begins to wonder in which century that 'last year' really was.

TOM MILNE

CINEMA-VERITE IN AMERICA

By Stephen Mamber

MIT PRESS, £5.00

DOCUMENTARY: A History of the Non-Fiction Film

By Erik Barnouw

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, £5.65

NON-FICTION FILM: A Critical History

By Richard Meran Barsam

ALLEN AND UNWIN, £3.75

The nature of actuality filming (documentary, newsreel, direct cinema or whatever) remains one of the more litigious questions in film debate. The documentarist, writes Erik Barnouw in his low-keyed survey of the field, 'is dedicated to not inventing. It is in selecting and arranging his findings that he expresses himself; these choices are, in effect, comments.' However: 'some artists turn from documentary to fiction because they feel it lets them get closer to truth. Some, it would appear, turn to documentary because it can make deception plausible.'

It might be argued that the issue is less to compare actuality with fiction, discovery with invention, than to compare varieties of fiction. Film, after all, consists of recorded images, and these images are not so much an abstract of the perceived world as a powerful alternative to it. Edgar Morin circled round this point in *Le Cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire* when he speculated on why the audiences at the first Lumière shows (who had often seen trains enter stations)

should have been startled by the *image* of such a train. Henri Langlois appears to have edged himself into the same channel of thought when he raised the paradox—referred to by Jean-Luc Godard in *La Chinoise*—that Méliès was the first documentarist (anticipating the moon landings, for instance), while Louis Lumière, the supposed first documentarist, was unintentionally subscribing to the painterly conventions of Auguste Renoir. None of the three authors under discussion (Barnouw, Barsam, Mamber) touch on this argument, nor indeed do they touch on the role Godard has played in creatively bedevilling our understanding of the fiction/documentary debate.

Barnouw and Barsam give us straightforward, circumstantial accounts of documentary history untroubled by those midnight doubts so characteristic of those who make the movies. Only Mamber really engages with the problematic aspect of direct filming—and realises, in effect, that the central question for the worker in *cinéma-vérité* is much the same as it is for the creator of fiction: that is, how one resolves the problem of form. Mamber wants to know whether the uncontrolled kind of filming, or American *cinéma-vérité*, initiated by the Drew-Leacock group and carried on (though they might disclaim any sense of tradition) by the Maysles brothers, D. A. Pennebaker and Frederick Wiseman, has evolved types of structure that do justice to the possible meanings the new technique might elicit. He believes that it has and demonstrates, in a scrupulous manner, how the 'crisis' approach to filming has given way to less imposed and less preconceived ways of editing the rushes. The 'crisis' format, incidentally, was a legacy from Robert Drew's experience as a photo-journalist on *Life*: it tended to limit subjects to heroic confrontations that unconsciously, perhaps, echoed the manner of certain Howard Hawks movies.

On a reflective level, the need facing the inventor and the discoverer is much the same: that of giving the subject full life. However, the discoverer has added hazards. Writes Erik Barnouw: 'Film was moving through his camera as he was shot and we see the footage blur into a spiral as he falls.' (Barnouw is recalling Vladimir Sushinsky, one of the hundred Soviet cameramen who died in action during the second world war. Maria Slavinskaya included his final spiral in her 1946 compilation, *Cameramen at the Front*.) Unavoidable the thought that to die while filming on the battlefront may be poignant, to die while working on a feature film may seem slightly grotesque, though the cameraman dying on the fictional project would hardly see it that way.

The urgency of documentary lies not only in the risk of its making but in its obligation to literal truthfulness, to show life as it is, and it can often spill over into zealousness: the wish to use the screen as a pulpit (as Grierson wanted) or the wish to embark on ideological wars. It is, to say the least, hard not to have violent preferences in this field (in darker moments, I like to believe that the genuine critic is one who prefers Storck to the GPO Film Unit kind of butter).

But perhaps we should celebrate the diversity of the non-fiction film without *parti pris*—rather as Barnouw and Barsam do. If I would choose Barnouw as a guide, I would do so because his taste comes closer to mine and he has, besides, dug up some useful information on Albert E. Smith, Charles Urban, Paul Zils and others. A Marxist by inclination, or so it seems, he does not offer up much in the way of investigated assumption. He is mainly interested in the modalities of expression—whether a film-maker is reporter, prophet or poet and so on. If you want a cogent working out of ideas, Mamber is the more stimulating writer, though one wants to qualify his view that the 'crisis' format failed to do justice to the possibilities of uncontrolled filming. In at least one case, that of *Primary*, form and technique were a perfect match in promoting the JFK image; or perhaps the JFK style was a necessary consequence of the 'crisis' format and the technique of uncontrolled filming?

ERIC RHODE

IMAGE AND INFLUENCE: Studies in the Sociology of Film

By Andrew Tudor

ALLEN AND UNWIN, £5.75

Andrew Tudor, a sociologist who has written articles in *Screen* as well as an earlier book, *Theories of Film*, makes a valiant attempt in *Image and Influence* to unite the paths of sociologist and film critic, academic and *aficionado*. On the evidence of its measured critique of earlier sociologists' accounts of cinema, Tudor's new book is timely and necessary; too many sociological analyses of film as 'mass communication' or 'mass culture', on this showing, have demonstrated little more than their authors' woeful lack of familiarity with (not to mention love of) the medium they were supposedly discussing.

Tudor's refreshingly different sensibility and approach succeeds in dispelling their conclusions admirably. What bothers him, quite rightly, is not only their attitudinising—as he points out, the tone of at least one well-known study of the 'dangers' of film 'is reminiscent of nothing so much as Victorian moralists' warnings of the dangers of masturbation'—but also what he obscurely calls 'the now familiar hypodermic model' of 'asymmetric communication'. This 'model' is in fact more familiar than this tortured designation suggests; what is meant is the patronising notion that 'mass' audiences are passive recipients of whatever the 'communicators', the film-makers, care to inject into them—that the receivers react to, rather than interact with, whatever is provided. Recent, ill-informed discussions about the effects of sex and violence (why are these always linked?) in films merely follow along this well-trodden path—a point Tudor might have made more strongly.

One variant of these analyses, the idea that 'mass culture' is escapist or inherently conservative, gets short shrift. Tudor insists that not only do 'audiences use the movies as one way of dealing with the demands and pressures society puts upon them', but also that films themselves 'participate in a continual and complex social process . . . they are both reflection and cause.'

It would be churlish to suggest that, put in less pompous language, such non-reductionist, eminently commonsensical but rather flat statements (audiences use film, we are earnestly assured, 'to gratify their needs') would be obvious to anyone but a sociologist. Tudor is capable of avoiding sociologese, the occupational hazard of his profession; indeed, some of his *aperçus* avoid it rather neatly. ('Popular culture is not to blame for the ills of our society. We are.') But he does not always even avoid the mixed metaphors for which academics are notorious ('Etzioni's tripartite division' is said to provide 'empirical leverage'). Such language seems unlikely to endear this book (about communication!) to the general reader; and this would be a pity, since it is a handy guide for anyone who wishes to get some purchase on the various problems of film and society.

Image and Influence discusses the themes behind these problems (the nature of film communication and culture; Hollywood as a paradigm movie communicator; the cinema audience; film languages, genres and movements, and how these develop). The treatment of these themes is sometimes pointed, more often discursive; the argument is not intended to proceed smoothly from chapter to chapter, and many sections, which are interesting enough in their own right, could be excised without affecting it. This unevenness is not too serious a drawback. 'A full scale account of film language,' as Tudor puts it, 'would be something approaching a decent map. In its absence we must work from rough sketches, some better mapped than others.' This is a realistic appraisal of what this book sets out to do—so that 'if we can begin to understand the interplay between movies and society, then we might be better off in trying to understand what is happening to us now with TV'—and of what it succeeds in doing.

Happily, the chapter that Tudor himself regards as central, on

Movie Languages', is the best in the book. Starting from the idea that the influx of structural linguistics and semiology on film analysis has led to a 'taxonomic nightmare' (as indeed it has), and that structuralist criticism in any case 'dresses inevitably and rightly subjective analysis in the clothing of spurious objectivity,' Tudor proceeds to achieve the impossible —he makes the ideas of Christian Metz comprehensible. *Image and Influence* would be worth reading for this section alone, which also provides a balanced but sketchy appraisal of Eisenstein's montage theory and a chastening reminder that 'the most developed discussion of the relation between sound and image in film remains that advanced by (Siegfried) Kracauer, which is based on a simple typology of synchronism and asynchronism, parallelism and counterpoint.'

Of the other chapters, the concluding one, which offers an alternative, evolutionary, approach to the sociological analysis of film is—as Tudor admits—tentative rather than convincing; the one dealing with 'Film Movements' relies almost exclusively on an account of German Expressionism; the one on Hollywood is inconclusive; and the one on popular genres is lame and uninspired until it becomes comparative. Some attention to the anti-Western (a sub-genre that is older than Tudor thinks) would have strengthened his point about the flexibility of the Western, and some discussion of the idea advanced in David Pirie's *A Heritage of Horror*, that the horror film has become as distinctively English as the Western is American, would have given focus to Tudor's rather vague, but invariably interesting, analysis.

Here we are in the realm of aesthetic judgment, and it is perhaps the saving grace of *Image and Influence* that its concerns are not purely sociological. But it is irksome to find academic concerns —to say only what can be verified —displacing what might have been good points about films. Tudor, who obviously loves films, holds himself back even to the extent of dropping some infuriatingly foreshortened and unsupported claims. That *Scarface* is 'more interesting' than *Little Caesar* is presumably a sound point—one would simply like to know *why* Tudor thinks so. But is it also self-evidently true that the exercise of thinking about *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* 'becomes quite arid'? Even though Tudor does complement his dislike of 'aesthetically induced myopia' with a critique of sociologically induced myopia, the latter intrudes to some extent. This is perhaps inevitable; but we could spare the academic impedimenta which blunt his arguments. We might give thanks that film is a medium in which (*pace* Jean-Luc Godard) footnotes are impossible.

PAUL THOMAS

VOICES FROM THE JAPANESE CINEMA

By Joan Mellen

LIVERIGHT, NEW YORK, $12.50

This is an interview book which promises rather more than it delivers. It consists of short critical essays and interviews with over a dozen leading Japanese directors and artists, carried out by Ms. Mellen during 1972. From the outset, it's clear that her interests are those of a social and political analyst rather than a film historian, which leads her towards questions dealing mainly with the changing perspective of Japanese life and art as seen through varying social attitudes. She delves less deeply into the stylistic achievements (and weaknesses) of the films discussed. And having personally experienced the problems of translated interviews in Japan, I sense that she tends to get some rather confused and opaque replies, not helped perhaps by her habit (at least in these transcripts) of passing elliptically from one topic to another and interpolating sudden personal opinions which might not be entirely clear to the interviewees.

She overpraises and overflatters Shindo, Imai and Hani. More rewardingly, the comments she elicits on Kurosawa and Ozu from their younger colleagues clearly demonstrate differing critical attitudes in East and West. Kurosawa is argued over for his political relevance, but no one tries to analyse why some of his effects are so *obvious*. Many of the comments on Ozu's old-fashioned conformism with dated social patterns (notably by Oshima) suggest that those interviewed are not familiar with his early work, full of stylistic *coups* and a response to everyday life which precedes and eclipses Italian neo-realism.

The interviews work best when Ms. Mellen keeps her subjects on a single track. Kobayashi fills in some information on the personal experiences he brought to *Ningen no Joken*, and Ichikawa elucidates some of his films' sexual and moral motivations (a pity that Ms. Mellen did not get him on to *The Heart*). In the interviews with her female subjects, she draws some useful comments. We learn about Madame Kawakita's early days as a stenographer and how the designer Setsu Asakura operates in a mainly male (and apparently conservative) milieu. Occasionally Ms. Mellen overdoes her Women's Lib consciousness, in such a statement to her interviewee as that American women are still not liberated because they enjoy seeing Brando's 'masculine bravado' in films (don't women appreciate his qualities as an *actor*, as well?).

Nevertheless, many glancing insights can be gleaned from this miscellaneous ragbag of questions and answers, hints and suggestions, not least the fact that Japanese film-makers are obsessively involved in the business of making pictures to an extent that puts most Western directors to shame. And those who enjoy the unexpectedly quirky statement can ponder over Ichikawa's declaration that Pasolini is now the world's leading director, or Terayama's desire to film those elderly, retired Japanese artists who now live in old-age homes, like Kinugasa. Could this be the agile, youthful-looking Kinugasa who recently held a lengthy press conference at the NFT, tirelessly signed stills and cheerfully spoke of his rejuvenation at the success in Europe of *A Page of Madness*?

JOHN GILLETT

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

GILBERT ADAIR teaches English in Paris, and has written poetry and film criticism . . . ROGER MORTIMORE is researching for a book on the history of the Spanish cinema . . . ERIC RHODE's new book *A History of the Cinema from its Origins to 1970* will be published in November by Allen Lane . . . LORNA SAGE teaches English Literature at the University of East Anglia at Norwich and reviews fiction regularly for the *Observer* . . . PETER STAMELMAN has conducted courses on aspects of film-making, and has been selected to be professional film-maker in New Jersey public schools as part of the U.S. Artists-in-the-Schools programme . . . CHARLES WOLFE teaches film at the University of Western Ontario.

Better than Metro isn't Good Enough

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her glib, charmless husband-playwright Alfred O'Dell; the sardonic critic Otto Lachsley, described by Marcia as being 'as appealing as an old sock hanging on a gas jet.' Hecht's pacing has never seemed so sluggish, nor his imagination so fusty. *Concerning a Woman of Sin* is another matter: the buoyancy of the script and performances counteracts any directorial shortcomings, and the episode serves as a fitting epilogue to Hecht's reign of autonomy. 'Movie-making has calmed down a bit in the last fifteen years,' says Hecht the narrator* (presumably he excluded his own contributions), 'and Hollywood is almost as sane a town as Keokuk . . . Well, let's say half as sane . . . Personally I pine a trifle for the old days when movie-making was a mad and wonderful thing—like riding bareback on a unicorn, or going after whales with a bean blower.'

The story takes us back to such days: Daisy Marcher, a nine-year-old tot, writes a torrid script called *Woman of Sin* which studio boss Jerome B. Cobb believes is 'greater than *Gone With the Wind* by twice!' In between the two stands agent Orlando Higgins, Hecht's most jovial scoundrel, struggling to keep the screenwriter's age a secret. As the agent, Eddie Albert overacts with charm, and Jenny Hecht (Hecht's nine-year-old daughter) makes a suitably wild-eyed and precocious authoress. But the richest performance comes from Alan Reed as the traditionally bulky and Philistine movie mogul, with his unctuous bows to Integrity and Cinema Art, and his poker-faced henchmen snapping at his heels.

The dichotomy of mood in *Actors and Sin* points to a general rule about Hecht's creative methods. If his subject is madness, murder and miracles, then the setting is usually New York; the idiot town of Hollywood seems only fit for idiot happenings. Yet the movies he wrote and directed, with or without MacArthur, were full to the brim with mystic melodramatics. They remain difficult to evaluate. It's clear these independent ventures show neither of the team at their most disciplined or rewarding; they also prove that Hecht, left to his own devices, is a dangerous man, capable of being tasteless and tedious. One wonders, also, whether the 'intelligent minority' they were catering for was anything more than themselves and a few other connoisseurs of the bizarre. (Who could have really enjoyed *Once in a Blue Moon* except the people making it?) And yet one can't help admiring Hecht and MacArthur's courage, persistence and gall in perpetrating such curios, whose enjoyable peculiarities and frustrating failings are so intermingled that one must take them whole or not at all. And at a time when the Hollywood screenwriter is again receiving his due, and sometimes achieving directorial control, these films provide a welcome stimulus—and a few warnings. ■

*In the print shown at the NFT, Hecht's voice isn't identified, nor is he mentioned among the credits: at the time his name was almost taboo in Britain following fervently anti-British statements during the Palestinian war, and the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association banned his movies from 1948 to 1951, delaying the release of *Whirlpool*, *Love Happy* and *Where the SidewalkEnds*.

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EMI for *Lucky Luciano.*
GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Stavisky . . .*
HEMDALE INTERNATIONAL for *Tommy.*
ESSENTIAL CINEMA for *Kaseki.*
CRAWFORD FILMS for *The Cars that Ate Paris.*
ALLIED ARTISTS/COLUMBIA/GIDEON BACHMANN for *The Man Who Would be King.*
UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *The Hindenburg.*
COLUMBIA PICTURES for *Angels over Broadway.*
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Soak the Rich.*
AMERICAN FILM THEATRE for *Galileo.*
FANTASY FILMS for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.*
FILMS DU PRISME for *F. for Fake.*
LES FILMS DU CARROSSE for *L'Histoire d'Adèle H.*
PAPALIOS PRODUCTIONS for *O Thiassos.*
SUNCHILD PRODUCTIONS for *India Song.*
TELEFILM, IRAN for *Prince Ehtejab.*
SWEDISH STATE RADIO/TV/PER B. ADOLPHSON for *The Magic Flute.*
AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANIES for *Love Among the Ruins.*
BBC-TV for *Kojak, Barlow, A Man Called Ironside, Softly, Softly, Cannon.*
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NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL/JONATHAN LEWIS for *Horse-Boy.*
ROGER DEAKINS for *Farmers' Hunt.*
NICHOLAS BROOMFIELD for *Behind the Rent Strike.*
ROGER MORTIMORE for *Patricio Miró a una Estrella, Don Quintin El Amargao.*
JAPAN FILM LIBRARY COUNCIL for *What Did the Lady Forget?, That Night's Wife, Passing Fancy, Days of Youth, Woman of Tokyo.*
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *I Was Born, But . . ., An Autumn Afternoon, Greed, The Scoundrel.*

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Letters

Adventures with Griffith

SIR,—What a shocker to read in the last issue that Kevin Brownlow is having himself to blow the trumpet of *Adventures with D. W. Griffith* (Secker & Warburg, £4.00). As if he had not already done enough by instigating and nurturing this marvellous book by Karl Brown (which I discovered only through the pages of S & S.).

It is a real scandal that this book should be languishing. There *must be* people who read, buy, enjoy, cherish film books—otherwise so many would never be published. And all over the country there are educational establishments with courses in film appreciation where victims are encouraged (obliged?) to study them. It should be everywhere. Those who have not met it so far don't know what they have been missing. It is not a duty but a pleasure, not a chore but a treat.

Yours faithfully,
IVOR MONTAGU

Garston, Hertfordshire.

Dreyer's Joan

SIR,—I thought your readers would be interested to know, as well as for the record, that Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, despite its enshrinement in the cinema's Pantheon, is by no means the version envisioned by the director, which he had in fact shot but which was altered by the producers, which is to say, the film's financial backers, the Société Générale des Films.

In a letter to Wilhelmina Van Ness, who has done an analysis of Joseph Delteil's book, from which the film's scenario was adapted by Dreyer and Delteil, and the film's relation to it, Arne Krogh of the Danish Film Museum has written as follows, quoted here with her permission, '. . . A complete negative or print cannot be found anywhere in the world, as all material was taken away from Dreyer by the producers immediately after the producing and before the first screening and edited, partly because of some scenes that surely would be resented by the French Catholics, partly because of the censorship, and finally because of the length, as the major part of the film was in close-ups which alarmed the producers who thought that these would bore the audience. Dreyer told me that he was not allowed to enter the studios after he had finished the shooting and he had no influence on what was cut away from the scenes. The negative and the prints were concealed so that he had not a chance to get in touch with his own film and he did not see the result of the cutting until the first screening in Copenhagen. He said that they had destroyed and damaged his film and he was, of course, very depressed because of this vandalism. The negative has never been found in its entirety. All the 'waste' scenes have disappeared. So the same thing has happened as with *Que Viva Mexico* made by Eisenstein.'

Sic semper cinema . . .

Yours faithfully,
HERMAN G. WEINBERG

New York.

Distant Thunder

SIR,—I must draw your attention to a serious misreading of Satyajit Ray's film *Distant Thunder*, by your critic Jonathan Rosenbaum. His attention seems to have gone to pieces at the end of the film: he writes that Gangacharan's wife Ananga 'runs off to give herself to the scarred rapist in exchange for some arum root to feed Moti.' This is nonsense. What we see, as earlier in the film, are two scenes intercut with each other. In one Ananga finds Moti and goes back to her home to get food for her. In the other her neighbour Chutki, who has been regularly sleeping with the scarred kiln worker, gets ready to run off to the city with him.

Your critic's mistake is an important one. It's not just that all Indian women look alike to him, but a failure to respond to the decorum of the film. Your critic invests the film with Western 'significance': the famine so utterly transforms society that all class distinctions are swept away, to the extent that a Brahmin's wife has to sleep with a deformed labourer. Ray is much more perceptive, and shows how a Brahmin stays a Brahmin. Ananga could not conceivably do what her neighbour has done.

May I add also that the scarred kiln worker is *not* the rapist. We never see the rapist's face, and he is, to all intents and purposes, clubbed to death by Ananga's friends after his attack on her.

Yours faithfully,
GERALD HAMMOND

Manchester University.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM *writes*: My thanks to Mr. Hammond for pointing out these errors—the first of which, I agree, is serious indeed. It has also been pointed out to me that the same mistake cropped up in two London papers after my review appeared, and now that I think of it, my own misreading may have been partially (and unconsciously) prompted by an earlier review of *Distant Thunder* in a SIGHT AND SOUND report from the Berlin Festival in 1973, which made the identical error. This seems to suggest that many reviewers, myself included, are at times prone to believe more in the printed word than in the fleeting evidence on the screen; a very bad habit, and I will endeavour to mend my ways.

An American in Paris

SIR,—It is odd to see a SIGHT AND SOUND reviewer attacking the *auteur* theory at this late date (Kevin Brownlow on Donald Knox's *The Magic Factory*, Spring 1975), odder still that he should go so naively about it. In what way does the art director's claim that his work on *An American in Paris* has been overlooked constitute 'the truth'? What competent craftsman ever felt his contribution was rated highly enough? Minnelli has worked with other art directors since, and the director's visual flair is there for all to see.

The real mystery of *The Magic Factory*, not even touched upon by Mr. Brownlow, is why Mr. Knox picked *An American in Paris* for his exercise in the first place. Provided he wanted to spotlight a musical, it is reasonable to assume he would want to pick a really good one. Yet no one sympathetic to the golden-age Metro musical has suggested for a long time that *An American in Paris* represents anything like the best work of Minnelli, Freed, or Kelly . . .

Yours faithfully,
MARTEN KIHLMAN

Helsinki.

Script or No Script

SIR,—Re your interview with Colin Welland (Spring 1975): I wish Ken Loach had told *me* that he barely needed a script on the three films I wrote for him, it would have made the work a lot easier. I have never worked with a director who 'wants to know what's wanted of him' as much as Ken Loach does, and I'm sure Jim Allen and David Mercer would agree.

Perhaps Colin can tell us where the 'flat Loach-type realism' is to be found on film. In *The Big Flame*? *Family Life*? *Days of Hope*? I would dearly love to know.

Furthermore, the statement that no television service in the world would have made *Leeds United!* perpetuates a myth. The Swedish, Danish or Norwegian services would have jumped at the chance to make it.

Yours faithfully,
NEVILLE SMITH

London, W.14.

Korngold

SIR,—I am preparing a biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold, the most famous, and indeed the greatest composer ever to write for films during the Golden Era of Hollywood, with the aid of George Korngold (the composer's son), Tony Thomas, Harold Truscott, and Lawrence Burton.

I would be grateful if any readers or correspondents of SIGHT AND SOUND, who feel they can offer me help, information or material no matter how small, would contact me.

Yours faithfully,
BRENDAN G. CARROLL

The Music Dept.,
Christ's College, Woolton Road,
Liverpool L16 8ND

FILM GUIDE

****ALICE DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE** (*Columbia-Warner*)
An American odyssey, with women's lib overtones, in which the heroine sets her sights for Monterey, a distant childhood and an unrealised singing career. With his stylistic exuberance at full stretch, Martin Scorsese creates an uncommon range and density of emotional life and makes this oft-told tale of middle America all his own. (Ellen Burstyn, Kris Kristofferson, Alfred Lutter.) *Reviewed.*

***AND NOW MY LOVE** (*Avco-Embassy*)
Claude Lelouch's apotheosis: a two-hour demonstration of the spellbinding power of flashy techniques married to the tritest subject matter. André Dussollier and Marthe Keller play a man and a woman whose love affair involves the whole history of the twentieth century and the whole history of cinema. (Charles Denner, Gilbert Becaud.)

AT LONG LAST LOVE (*Fox-Rank*)
Peter Bogdanovich does it to Cole Porter, and to the movie musical, and to a cast of non-singing, non-dancing stars who are required to sing and dance through some monumentally tedious romantic complications, none of which are complicated enough to hold this nostalgic house of cards together. (Cybill Shepherd, Burt Reynolds, Madeline Kahn.)

****½BITTER TEARS OF PETRA VON KANT, THE** (*Cinegate*)
A 1972 film by Fassbinder which conjugates the usual Sirkian excruciation with Straub-like camera movements and dialogue out of Mankiewicz to describe the sorrows of a fashion designer spurned by her female lover. Elegantly staged in a single set, where permutations of actors and camera help to spell out the freedom-and-slavery theme in a highly theatrical style. (Margit Carstensen, Irm Hermann.)

***BLOOD FOR DRACULA** (*EMI*)
Better fare than *Flesh for Frankenstein*, partly because one isn't distracted by the faint-hearted flirtation with 3-D, but mainly because Paul Morrissey makes good use of some atmospheric locations. Roman Polanski and Vittorio De Sica guest-star to effect, outshining the poor Count, who is reduced like Frankenstein to a rather desperate camp invention. (Joe Dallesandro, Udo Kier.)

***BREAKOUT** (*Columbia-Warner*)
Prison escape caper loosely based on a real-life breakout from a Mexican hell-hole. Routine but lively, and given an extra edge by the supporting performances (Sheree North, Randy Quaid, Roy Jenson) and Lucien Ballard's camerawork. (Charles Bronson, Jill Ireland, Robert Duvall, John Huston; director Tom Gries.)

CAPONE (*Fox-Rank*)
Roger Corman unprofitably goes back over ground he has more succinctly and wittily explored before, simply to fill in some gaps in the Capone biography (how he began as a street hoodlum; how he ended as a syphilitic madman). Even more unprofitably, the direction is left in the unsubtle care of Steve Carver. (Ben Gazzara, Harry Guardino, Susan Blakely.)

****CARS THAT ATE PARIS, THE** (*Crawford Films*)
Oddball movie from Australia which investigates weird happenings in an outback community living off the profits and pleasures of specially arranged car accidents. The notion could have been better developed, but it's still great fun, packed with bizarre humour, and a promising debut from writer-director Peter Weir. (Terry Camilleri, John Meillon, Kevin Miles.) *Reviewed.*

***DAY OF THE LOCUST, THE** (*CIC*)
Granted that Nathanael West is one of the great unfilmables, Schlesinger still seems to have done a peculiarly botched job—misjudging the use of visual metaphors to parallel West's own, and blurring the outline of the characters. William Atherton's Tod Hackett stands out among the too familiar faces. (Donald Sutherland, Karen Black, Burgess Meredith.) *Reviewed.*

FUNNY LADY (*Columbia-Warner*)
A mismanaged attempt to wring further songs, laughter and tears from the life of Fanny Brice. Poor choreography, a poorer script and a depopulated supporting cast all conspire to bring on the doldrums, though James Caan's Billy Rose has charms. (Barbra Streisand, Omar Sharif, Roddy McDowall; director, Herbert Ross.)

****GODFATHER PART II, THE** (*CIC*)
Not so much a sequel as a before-and-after remake, this successor to a blockbuster has better performances (Al Pacino, Robert DeNiro, Lee Strasberg), more imaginative use of period décor, sharper photography, and less lurid violence. But it has nothing to say about the Corleone family and America that wasn't already evident in Part I. (Director, Francis Ford Coppola.) *Reviewed.*

****GREAT WALDO PEPPER, THE** (*CIC*)
The *Butch Cassidy* recipe much as before, with the shrinking frontiers this time closing in on the daring young men in their flying machines. Witty and quite appealing, and the brilliant stunt flying is an undoubted bonus. (Robert Redford, Bo Svenson; director, George Roy Hill.)

****ILLUMINATION** (*Contemporary*)
A sort of everyman morality tale about a youth seeking absolute truth but settling, grown older, wiser and a breadwinner, for relative values. Done sub-Makavejev style, with a nice glint of humour, but becoming all too predictable around midway. (Stanislaw Latallo; director, Krzysztof Zanussi.)

***IT'S ALIVE** (*Columbia-Warner*)
'Save your screams until you see its face,' scream the posters, yet the face is barely visible and Larry Cohen's chiller about the birth (and escape) of a deformed baby is the better for it. Some stereotyped scenes, though John Ryan's splendid performance as the beleaguered dad provides compensation. (Sharon Farrell, Andrew Duggan, Guy Stockwell.)

***JANIS** (*CIC*)
More of a tribute to the phenomenal Janis Joplin than a documentary, *Janis* gives full and unstinting coverage to her concert performances, filling the spaces in between with a rough assemblage of interview clips and rehearsal sessions. (Directors, Howard Alk, Seaton Findlay.)

KLANSMAN, THE (*Hemdale*)
Schematism inevitably rears its head when scenarists Samuel Fuller and Millard Kaufman attempt a logical demonstration of how civil disturbance (here, racial conflict in the Deep South) escalates into full-blown civil war. Terence Young contributes a cheap and sweaty apocalyptic atmosphere, and Richard Burton falls casualty to impossible casting. (Lee Marvin, Cameron Mitchell, O. J. Simpson.)

***LORDS OF FLATBUSH, THE** (*Columbia-Warner*)
A further trip down America's memory lane (the scene is Brooklyn, 1957) made with much love and little money. There's also little plot—merely the aimless antics of likeable high school layabouts. Stephen F. Verona and Martin Davidson's direction is rough and ready, but dialogue and performances have the sting of truth. (Perry King, Sylvester Stallone, Susie Blakely.)

****LOVIN' MOLLY** (*Gala*)
Imagine *Jules and Jim* transplanted to rural Texas, with destructive Catherine replaced by constructive Molly, and you arrive at the thematic basis of this adaptation of Larry McMurtry's *Leaving Cheyenne*. Unlikely as it sounds, Anthony Perkins, Beau Bridges and Blythe Danner as the lovable trio come dangerously close to making it work. (Director, Sidney Lumet.)

****½LUCKY LUCIANO** (*EMI*)
Typical Rosi 'investigation' of the Mafia and its drug rackets, tracing the links which inextricably bind crime and politics back to the combined operation between US Army and Mafiosi during the Sicily landings of 1943. Cut by 20 minutes for British release, but still fascinating. (Gian Maria Volonté, Edmond O'Brien, Rod Steiger.) *Reviewed.*

****½MATTEI AFFAIR, THE** (*Cinegate*)
Fascinating investigation into the career and mysterious death of Enrico Mattei, whose efforts to ally his state oil company with Third World countries and compete with private individuals set many controversial precedents. Like many of Rosi's fictionalised re-enactments, it raises more questions than it answers, all of them constructive. (Gian Maria Volonté, Gianfranco Ombuen.) *Reviewed.*

****½MEDEA** (*Eagle*)
A revelation from the pre-trilogy days of Pasolini, in many ways adumbrating the story-cycle films; but both more powerful in its evocation of a time when the rituals of myth were on the point of becoming the materials of history and anthropology, and more haunting in its staging of the barbarian princess' revenge and her insinuation of magic into mundane, 'modern' Corinth. (Maria Callas, Giuseppe Gentile.)

MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL (*EMI*)
Jokes apart, the movie's Scottish locations provide a beautifully convincing medieval setting; with the jokes, it's the usual Python fare—much better organised than *And Now For Something Completely Different*, but still a bit indigestible. (Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam; directors, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones.)

****½NIGHT MOVES** (*Columbia-Warner*)
A crackling good *film noir* whose darkness revolves as much round the motives of the detective (Gene Hackman) as round the intrigue he is seeking to penetrate, with hints of post-Watergate despair leaking out of every pore. Arthur Penn directs Alan Sharp's script with unwavering assurance. (Jennifer Warren, Edward Binns, Melanie Griffith.) *Reviewed.*

****½OCCASIONAL WORK OF A FEMALE SLAVE** (*Cinegate*)
Alexander Kluge's brilliantly lucid analysis of the contradictory relationship of family and society in the modern industrial state, focused on the quixotic attempts of a housewife and part-time abortionist to translate ideas into action. A rigorous demonstration of how complex ideas can be simply expressed with no loss of dimension or perspective. (Alexandra Kluge, Franz Bronski.)

****½PASSENGER, THE** (*CIC*)
A bracing return for Antonioni, who takes his journalist hero from Africa to England to Germany to Spain in search of the identity of a dead Third World rebel gun-runner whose life he has decided to assume. Likeable performances by Jack Nicholson and Maria Schneider, and a stunning denouement that suspends all explanations for the sake of a purely formal adventure. *Reviewed.*

PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE (*Fox-Rank*)
The Phantom of the Opera is not the only pop myth ground down and camped up (others include Faust and Dorian Gray) for this rocky musical horror show. Brian De Palma seems to have one eye on Stanley Kubrick in the sardonic sweep of his style and his theatre of cruelty staging, but winds up as Ken Russell camp follower. (Paul Williams, William Finley.)

***RAINBOW BOYS, THE** (*EMI*)
Shaggy dog Canadian comedy about three misfits roaming the wilds of British Columbia vaguely in search of a fabulous gold-mine. Undeniably funny and well acted, even though little more than an elaboration of director Gerald Potterton's own *The Railrodder*, with ideas from *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and dialogue from *The Caretaker*. (Donald Pleasence, Kate Reid, Don Calfa.)

ROSEBUD (*United Artists*)
Otto Preminger returns to the *smorgasbord* style of *The Cardinal*, but seems to have lost the knack of arriving at a digestible balance of problems personal, political and moral. Thematic ambivalence loses out to commercial diffidence and overkill; Peter O'Toole takes over the Robert Mitchum part with great insouciance (and the latter's crushed felt hat from *Secret Ceremony*). (Richard Attenborough, Cliff Gorman.)

***SHAMPOO** (*Columbia-Warner*)
Montage of events concerning a Beverly Hills hairdresser and the damage his love affairs cause—on the night the nation causes far more by electing Richard Nixon. Pairing sophisticated sex farce with social comedy, Robert Towne's script seems as erratic as Hal Ashby's direction and Warren Beatty's performance. (Julie Christie, Goldie Hawn, Jack Warden.)

****½STAVISKY . . .** (*Gala*)
The least apparently 'experimental' of Resnais' features, this swan-song to Thirties elegance before the near-collapse of the Third Republic may well be his most accomplished since *Muriel*. Brilliantly combining Trotsky and Lubitsch to reveal the tremors of history in the balance, this glittering account of the high life of a famous swindler demands to be seen on a big screen. Superb score by Stephen Sondheim, and performances by Belmondo and Boyer brimming with intimations of mortality. *Reviewed.*

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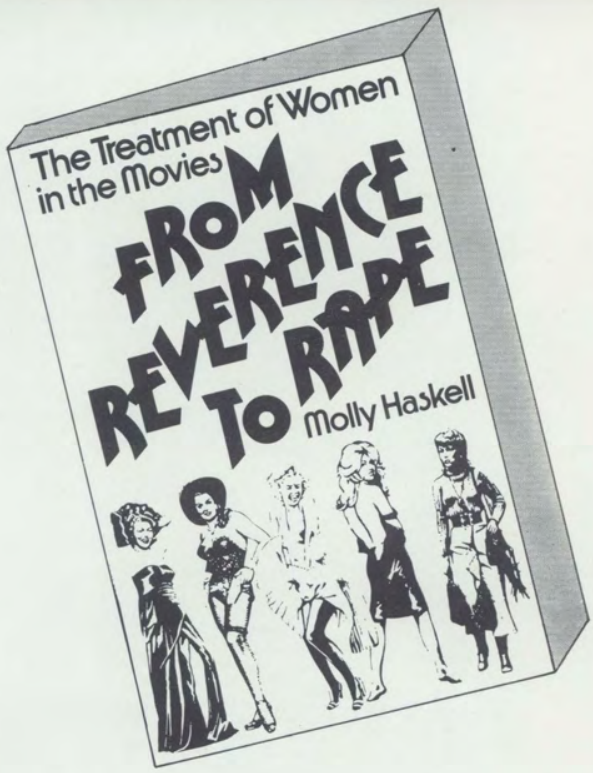

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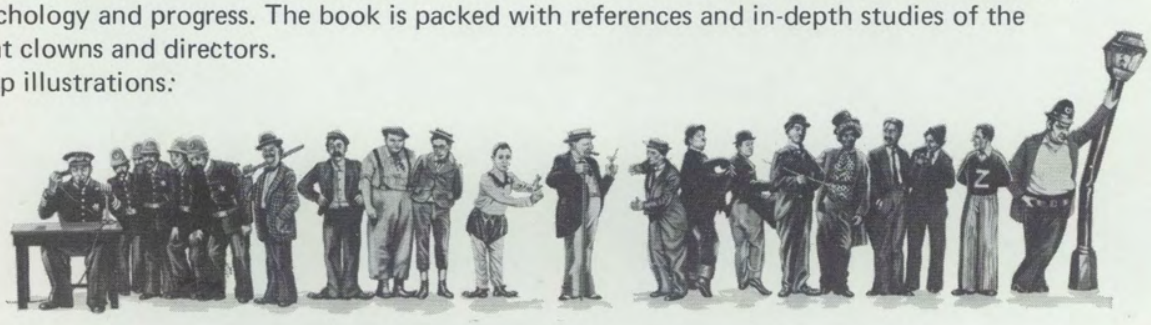

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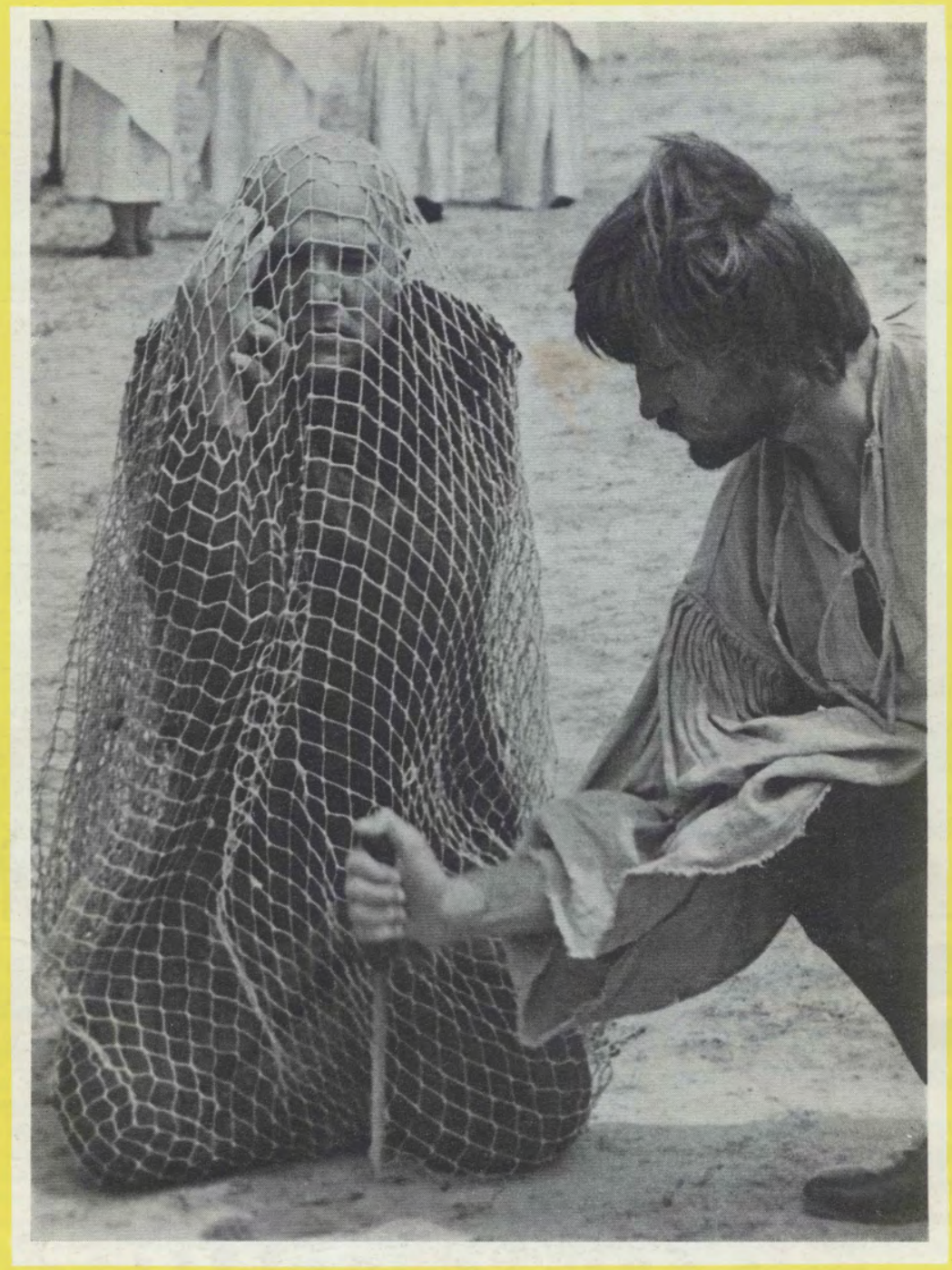

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